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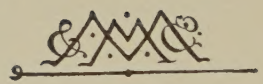
SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY

AND OTHER LITERARY PIECES



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SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY

AND OTHER LITERARY PIECES

BY

SIR JAMES GEORGE FRAZER

FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON
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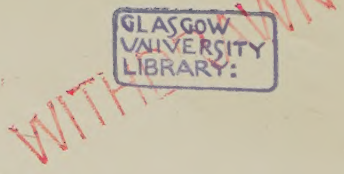

HAEC FOLIA SERA ET IAMIAM FORSITAN PERITURA

DUM VIVUNT ADHUC VIRENTQUE

SACRA ESSE VOLUI

CARO AMICO

WILLIAM WYSE

QUOCUM OLIM ET RURA PERAGRARE AMOENA

ET ATTICIS MORANTEM FRANGERE DIEM SERMONIBUS SOLEBAM

UT NOSTRAE MULTOS PER ANNOS CONIUNCTAE AMICITIAE

BREVIBUS HUIUSCE QUI LABITUR ANNI ROSIS

PAULISPER SUPERSIT MEMORIA

PREFACE

THE pieces collected in this little volume have been written at various times as interludes in a life devoted to graver studies. Some of them have been published before, others now see the light for the first time. Whether it was worth while to draw these from the obscurity of the author's desk, and to gather those from the books and journals where they lay dispersed, is a question to be decided by the reader, to whom I submit the waifs and strays in the hope that they may help him to while away an idle half-hour snatched from the duties or pleasures of ordinary life. Most of the pieces were composed in the classic groves of Cambridge, and the rest in the hardly less classic courts of the Temple, haunted by the shades of Johnson, of Goldsmith, of Cowper, and a crowd of other English worthies, whose memories the world will not willingly let die. It will be more than enough for me if these trifles should be deemed not wholly unworthy of the scenes in which they were written, and to which they owe any measure of inspiration they may possess.

J. G. FRAZER.

1 BRICK COURT, TEMPLE,
LONDON, 30*th September* 1919

NOTE

I thank the publishers and editors of the books and journals mentioned below for their courteous permission to reprint the following pieces in this volume: "A Visit to Coverley Hall" was prefixed to a selection of Addison's essays (Macmillan & Co., London, 1915); "Sir Roger in Cambridge," "Sir Roger in Covent Garden," "Sir Roger in the Temple," and "A Dream of Cambridge" were contributed to *The Saturday Review* (27th March, 10th April 1915; 19th February, 2nd December 1916). The memoir of Cowper was prefixed to a selection of his letters (Macmillan & Co., London, 1912). The notice of William Robertson Smith and "For a Scrap of Paper" were published in *The Fortnightly Review* (June 1894; September 1916). The biographical sketches of Fison and Howitt appeared in *Folk-Lore* (30th June 1909); "The Taking of the Redoubt," in *The Cambridge Review* (10th March 1886); "Veterans of the Old Guard," in *Christ's College Magazine* (No. 24, Lent Term, 1894); "French and English Chivalry" in *The French Quarterly* (January 1919); and "Modern Italy and Greece" in *The Book of Italy* (T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1916). "My Old Study" is taken from the preface to my translation of Pausanias (Macmillan & Co., London, 1898), and "Life's Fitful Fever" and "Beyond the Shadows" from the prefaces to the first and second editions of *Passages of the Bible chosen for their Literary Beauty and Interest* (A. & C. Black, London, 1895 and 1909). The other pieces in the volume have not been published before.

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I

SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY

I

A VISIT TO COVERLEY HALL

HAVING undertaken to edit the essays in which Sir Roger de Coverley plays a leading part, I naturally formed a wish to visit the old knight's pleasant seat in Worcestershire, where the Spectator passed the month of July with him in rural retirement more than two hundred years ago. I was the more desirous of doing so, because my researches into the history of the Spectator Club had led me to believe, that on the dissolution of the club many of the papers relating to it had been sent for safe-keeping to Captain Sentry, Sir Roger's heir, and that some of them at least were still preserved in the muniment room at Coverley Hall. Accordingly I wrote to inquire of the present owner of the Hall, and received from him a very courteous letter in reply. He informed me that he had in his possession a considerable number of papers concerning the club, that he had never himself examined them with attention, but that I should be free to do so and to publish anything of interest I might find in them,

if I would pay him a visit and examine the documents on the spot, as he valued them too highly to trust them to the hazards of the post. He only stipulated, that I should not make his name public, nor drop any hint as to the part of Worcestershire in which Coverley is situated; for he leads, as he told me, a very retired life on his ancestral estate, and he fears that, were the Hall better known, the fame of Sir Roger might attract many visitors, whom he could not admit without inconvenience, nor refuse admittance without discourtesy.[1] Needless to say I gladly accepted his kind invitation and willingly gave the required pledge of secrecy. My wish was to visit the old Hall in summer, that I might see it as the Spectator himself saw it in those bright July days of 1711; but legal business (for like a well-known member of the Spectator Club I am a Templar) detained me in town last year all through the summer, and it was not until late in the autumn that I was able to go down into Worcestershire. Yet the delay had its compensation, for the autumn was one of unusual beauty. Never, perhaps,

[1] Well-informed readers need hardly be reminded that the name of Coverley village and Hall was changed in the later years of the eighteenth century, and no longer appears on modern maps. An old map of Arrowsmith's is, I believe, the last which marks the place under the name of Cuverly (*sic*). The circumstances under which the change of name took place were remarkable and peculiar. They are fully related in the *Annual Register*, and more concisely in an excellent article in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, to which, for obvious reasons, I am precluded from referring more particularly. Some trifling errors of detail crept into the original article, but these, I am glad to observe, have been corrected in the second edition of the *Dictionary*.

within the memory of men now living did summer fade so slowly and, as it were, so reluctantly through such exquisite gradations of mellow sunshine and glorious colouring into the greyness and sadness of winter. In that gorgeous sunset of the year I journeyed down to Worcestershire. After being long immured in the smoke and grime of London, it was a pure joy to me to drink in the green landscape, with its fields and meadows, its winding rivers fringed by pale willows, its old manors embosomed in trees, its peaceful villages nestling round the churches with their grey time-worn spires or ivied towers, as they floated silently, like a dream of heaven, past the window at which I sat. Over all rested, like a benediction, the blue sky flecked with white clouds of a lovely October day.

But mindful of my promise I will say no more of my journey, and will give no clue that could lead to the identification of the Hall. I will only say, that I have visited all Sir Roger's old haunts and seen them with my own eyes. I have walked at sunset in the long avenue of elms and heard the rooks cawing overhead, and at a later hour I have watched from the same spot the moon rising behind the ivy-clad ruins of the abbey and silvering the whole scene with her gentle beams. I have sat in Sir Roger's pew in the old village church—a square high-backed pew of black oak just under the pulpit—and have inspected the monuments of the Coverley family, which break the severe simplicity of the walls, from

the uncouth effigy of the Crusader with his upturned face, clasped sword, and crossed legs, down to the marble tablets of generals and admirals, of deans and prebends, in the reigns of Charles the Second and James the Second. I have paced the long gallery where the family portraits hang. They hang just as the Spectator describes them, but naturally not a few have been added since his time; for though the name of Coverley became extinct with Sir Roger, the family has continued unbroken to this day, and, without rising to posts of the highest distinction, has served its king and country in peace and war, on sea and land, with credit to itself and advantage to the public. Even among the portraits which the Spectator must have seen, I noted not a few worthy of remark, which he passed over in silence. For instance, there is a portrait by Vandyke of a dark handsome man in a shining cuirass and great plumed hat, which throws half his face into deep shadow. He bore the king's commission and fell at the battle of Naseby. Another of the family in the same century rose to be Admiral of the White under the sailor king, James the Second. There is a portrait of him in his admiral's dress by Kneller. The face is rubicund, bronzed and weather-beaten; his right hand rests on the hilt of his sword, the left sleeve is empty and pinned to his breast, which is covered with orders. The tradition at Coverley is, that he lost his arm at the battle of La Hogue, his ship being one of those that pressed hardest on the French

flagship, the *Royal Sun*, when that gallant ship, alone and surrounded by enemies, fell sullenly back, the fleur-de-lys still flaunting proudly at the mast-head, all her portholes sputtering fire, and all her scuppers spouting blood, till she was lost to her pursuers in the darkness. Next to the portrait of the admiral hangs the picture of a grave divine in cassock and flowing wig, seated in a pensive attitude with a great book open before him, and the spire of Coverley church appearing over very green trees and under a very blue sky in the background. He was a younger son, and held the family living of Coverley for many years. They say he was a learned man, a Fellow of his college at one of the Universities (I forget which), and very deep in Hebrew and the mathematics. In later life he devoted much of his ample leisure—for the parish duties of Coverley in those days were not very onerous—to calculating the number of the Beast in Revelations; he even meditated a treatise on the subject, which no doubt would have done him great honour, had he lived to publish it, but unfortunately he died before he had completed his calculations. Among these grave and gallant men there are portraits of fair ladies. I noticed one in particular of a blooming maid-of-honour, who danced with Charles the Second at the first ball which the Merry Monarch gave at Whitehall after his restoration.

But of all the portraits in the gallery, the gem, in my eyes, is that of dear Sir Roger himself. I came

on it suddenly, and without a hint of whom it represented. For I had asked of the kind owner of the Hall, that I might walk by myself for a little in the long gallery and give myself up, without interruption, to the meditations which the place was fitted to evoke. I was pacing up and down in a fit of musing. It was near sunset, and the light was failing; but suddenly the departing luminary broke through a bank of clouds in the west, and his long level beams, shooting through a lofty oriel, fell full on a portrait which at once riveted my attention. I could not mistake it. The tall, slender, graceful figure—the features of almost feminine delicacy—the frank, honest blue eyes—the pleasant smile—the air of old-world courtesy—all tinged, and, as it were, fused into tenderness by something child-like and appealing, almost pathetic—it was Sir Roger himself. He is dressed in hunting costume, with his dogs about him and a rather florid landscape in the background. The portrait is youthful; there is a doubt whether it is by Lely or Kneller. I am no great judge of pictures, but it seemed to me to be in the best manner of Lely.

I have slept in the haunted chamber which was shut up when Sir Roger took possession of the Hall, and which he caused to be exorcized by his chaplain. To judge by experience, the exorcism was effectual; for though I lay long awake, I saw nothing more ghostly than the dance of shadows cast by the firelight on the ceiling (the evening being damp and

chilly they had lighted a bright fire on the hearth), and heard nothing more blood-curdling than the tick of a death-watch behind the black wainscot, the croaking of frogs in the lily-lake under my window, and the hooting of owls in the elms. With these sounds in my ears I fell fast asleep, and slept as sweetly as ever I did in my life, till a sunbeam stealing through a chink in the shutters woke me, and I sat up wondering where I was.

Before I quit the Hall I will only add, that sitting in the great oriel, where the arms of the Coverleys are blazoned on the panes, I chanced to take up an old volume that was lying on the window seat. What was my joy to find it to be Baker's *Chronicle*, the very copy that Sir Roger was wont to peruse, sitting in his high armchair by the great fireplace of the hall after a hard day's hunting! I almost thought I could recognize the old knight's thumb-marks on some of the yellow dog-eared leaves. I fancy he must have nodded over some of these same pages and wakened with a start, when the ponderous volume fell with a crash to the floor.

Then, too, I have seen the cottage of Moll White, the witch. Her memory survives in the village, and anybody can point out her former abode. It is one of a row of whitewashed cottages, with high thatched roofs, which overlook the common, a long straggling green bounded by tall elms and enclosing in its midst a pool, where children paddle, ducks swim, and on hot summer days the cows stand

in the water with the flies buzzing about their heads. Beyond and above the elms, at the far end of the common, appears a line of low hills, which, when I saw them, showed blue and faint through the gathering mists of an autumn evening. Moll's cottage is well kept, and except for a tabby cat, which sat purring on the doorstep and rubbed itself affectionately against my legs, there was nothing about it to suggest that it had ever been the home of a witch. There were pots of flowers in the windows, creepers growing over the porch, and a linnet singing merrily in a cage above the door.[1]

The last of the scenes associated with Sir Roger which I visited in the neighbourhood was the Saracen's Head. It is a little wayside inn standing on the brow of a hill, where the road dips down rather steeply into a valley. Before turning to

[1] I have described as I saw it what is certainly now shown as Moll White's cottage. But in my capacity of editor I am bound to point out that neither the style nor the situation of the cottage answers well to the Spectator's description of it as a "hovel, which stood in a solitary corner under the side of the wood." Perhaps the cottage has been rebuilt and improved since Moll's day, and others may have grown up about it. Or can it be that the identification is an arbitrary one, devised perhaps by some ingenious owner of the cottage for the sake of turning a dishonest penny? Now that I think of it, I did slip a small silver coin into the hand of the smiling old dame who let me peep in at her kitchen, and I daresay others have done so before me. I am sorry to cast any doubt on the accuracy of a picturesque tradition, and nothing but a strict regard for truth could induce me to do so. But throughout these my researches it has been my constant aim to weigh every statement, and to set down none for which there is not either conclusive evidence or at all events a high degree of probability. I could never consent, like some historians, to embellish a plain narrative of facts with a varnish of fiction, or to tickle the imagination of my readers at the expense of their understanding.

examine the famous signboard I stood for a moment to contemplate the prospect from the height; for the sun was setting behind the line of blue hills I have spoken of, and his last rays spread a soft radiant glory over the woods in the valley, some of them already stripped and bare, others still wrapt in a gorgeous pall of autumnal red and gold. Through their gaps I could catch glimpses of a winding river, its surface here darkened by the evening shadows, there gleaming like fire with reflections of the celestial glory. The signboard dangles from an iron stanchion above the door of the inn. The head of the Saracen, which had lately received a fresh coat of paint, is certainly very ferocious, but under the long moustachios and whiskers I fancied I could still trace a faint, a ridiculous resemblance to the kindly features of Sir Roger.

That was the end of my visit to Coverley. Next day I returned to London and resumed my usual duties. I have seldom enjoyed anything so much as this excursion into Worcestershire, and I shall always treasure the memory of it. Curiously enough, though it happened so lately, there is something far away about it in my mind, as if it had taken place many years instead of only a few months ago. Indeed, writing as I now do in the heart of London, with the rumble of its ceaseless traffic in my ears, the thought of the quiet old hall, the tall elms, the cawing rooks, the village church, and the cottages on the green in the evening twilight, comes back

on me like a beautiful dream rather than the recollection of a waking reality.

Along with the papers relating to the Spectator Club, which are preserved at Coverley Hall, there is a small but interesting collection of relics. Among them I noted in particular Sir Roger's walking-stick and favourite armchair; the sword which Captain Sentry used at the battle of Steenkirk, and which he wore when he escorted Sir Roger to the theatre; also a hat with two bullet-holes through the crown, which is traditionally said (for I could find no written record on the subject) to have been worn by the captain on the same hard-fought day in Flanders, when he charged with his regiment on a French battery. Then there is a collection of pipes smoked by members of the club, together with a number of tobacco-stoppers, some of which are supposed (though again I could find no good evidence in support of the tradition) to have been made by Will Wimble. But perhaps the most interesting relic of all is the original letter in which Sir Roger's butler announced his old master's death to the Spectator. The paper is somewhat yellow and the ink faded with time, but the handwriting is still perfectly legible, except in a few places where it has been accidentally blurred, perhaps by the tears of the writer, or by those which Sir Andrew Freeport shed when he read the letter aloud to the club. In my quality of editor I thought it my duty to collate the letter carefully with the copy of it published in

The Spectator, and I can vouch for the accuracy of the copy, except for a few trivial points of spelling and punctuation, which I have not thought it worth while to set right. The only other relic I need mention is a phial, containing a dingy-looking liquid and labelled "The Widow Trueby's Water." I had the curiosity to taste this celebrated specific for the gravel, but over the results of the experiment I prefer to draw a veil.

The papers relating to the Spectator Club, which I found at Coverley, consist for the most part simply of the minutes of the meetings. These seem to have been regularly kept, and though there are several gaps in them, notably in the summer of 1711, when the Spectator himself was absent in Worcestershire, it might almost be possible to construct from them a continuous history of the club. I shall not attempt anything so ambitious; indeed the shortness of my stay at Coverley forbade me to collect materials sufficient for such an undertaking. But besides the minutes I was fortunate enough to discover several papers of notes and jottings, some of which have actually been worked up into finished essays in *The Spectator*. Others apparently refer to essays which were planned but never completed; and amongst these there is one which I have thought it worth while to publish, not for the sake of the literary merit of the piece, which is insignificant, but because it sheds new light on the private life of a prominent member of the club, Mr. William

Honeycomb. The paper appears to be a rough unfinished sketch for a paper in *The Spectator*; but it is impossible to speak with confidence on the subject, as the manuscript begins and ends abruptly and bears neither date nor signature. The handwriting is certainly not Addison's, and the style is quite unlike his, being entirely destitute of those literary graces and delicate strokes of humour which enliven the productions of that elegant writer. It is rather in the manner of Budgell at his best or of Steele at his worst. The only value of the piece, so far as it has any, is a certain plain straightforward way of telling the facts, which carries the impress of truth and verisimilitude on the face of it to every unprejudiced mind. I venture to believe, that readers who are interested in the history of the club will be willing to overlook the baldness of the style for the sake of the genuine biographical interest of the matter. The many friends of the club have always mourned the sad fate of Mr. William Honeycomb, who was cut off by an untimely marriage, while he was still in the full bloom of a very prolonged youth. The paper which I have been so happy as to unearth, sheds perhaps a glimmer of light on his mysterious disappearance from that fashionable world of which he was so long a shining ornament. At all events, it illustrates the last phase of his life, when he had bidden farewell to the gaieties of the metropolis and devoted himself, in the seclusion of the country, to the cultivation of cabbages

and the domestic virtues. It is my intention hereafter to publish the piece in facsimile with a full apparatus of conjectural emendations, or corruptions, as the case may be, and a commentary in which I will explain everything that is perfectly obvious and will leave all that is dark in a decent obscurity. In this way I do not doubt that I shall win for myself a place among the foremost scholars of the age, and be hailed as a prodigy of learning, a sort of second Scaliger or Bentley, a new star just risen above the literary horizon of Europe. But as I foresee, that some time must elapse before I can fulfil these astronomical predictions by completing what a learned lady once called my *opus magnus*, I am resolved not to keep the public trembling on the tiptoe of suspense, but to oblige them by publishing the manuscript at once, just as it came into my hands, unadorned by any of those brilliant conjectural emendations on which I build all my hopes of posthumous renown. I have merely reduced the somewhat eccentric orthography of the essay to our modern standard, and relieved it of the superfluity of capitals and italics (indicated by underscoring in the manuscript), which, however they may have been deemed ornamental in the days of Queen Anne, are rejected by the taste of the more polite age in which it is our happiness to live under good King George the Fifth. Without further preface or apology I subjoin a copy of the manuscript:

"But the club was fast breaking up. The death of Sir Roger de Coverley was soon followed by another disaster of almost equal magnitude, the marriage of Will Honeycomb. It is sad to think that the glass of fashion, the gay dog, the agreeable rattle, the faded beau, the battered rake, who had been eight and forty any time these twelve years past, should retire from the scene of his triumphs a blushing bridegroom, arm in arm with a blowzy milkmaid, while the bells of the village church rang a joyous peal. The circumstances attending this melancholy affair have never been fully cleared up; indeed we know nothing about them except the little we can glean from Will's own account, which is naturally coloured in rosy tints and flavoured with some rather faint reminiscences of love's young dream. But for my part I cannot help suspecting that a horsewhip, brandished by a stout bucolic arm, had some share in leading Mr. Honeycomb like a lamb to the altar. Be that as it may, we leave poor Will in the country, dejectedly strolling about his paternal acres and contemplating his turnip-fields with lack-lustre eyes, while his mind wanders far away to the Mall, and St. James's Park, and Covent Garden, and he thinks with a sigh of the happy days when he strutted and swaggered about these haunts of fashion, his sword at his side and his hat cocked at the most rakish angle, ogling the frail beauties, glaring defiance at the men, and bowing to the greatest toasts in their coaches, whether he had ever

seen them before or not. And those early winter mornings, too, when all sober people were abed, and the sky was just beginning to purple behind the tall gables of the houses, how he used to lurk with other young bloods in an alley and hear the distant watchman droning out the hour, and then, peeping round the corner, to see him coming down the dark street with his lantern, to bounce out, knock him down, and hold his head, spluttering and swearing, under the refreshing water of the matutinal pump ! And then that fat pursy cit in Cheapside, how he skipped and capered when they formed a ring round him and pinked him behind with their toasting-forks ! To see him spinning round and round like a teetotum, and to hear him squealing like a stuck pig ! Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha ! The tears ran down the old beau's withered cheeks at the thought of it. Ah ! that was something like life, different from those damned turnip-tops ! He kicked viciously at a stone in the path, and having squirred it away among the turnips he felt a little relieved, and resumed his agreeable meditations.

" But the smile that had begun to dawn on his face died out, and a shadow crossed his brow, as he thought of that other early winter morning in the fields behind Montague House—how dark it was and how cold !—he shivered yet at the memory of it—and the flaring torches—and the measured ground—and the flash of swords—and that limp figure borne away by staggering men through the

darkness—— No, no, it was better not to think of it. But how delightful it was in winter evenings, when the candles were lit in the theatre, and the music struck up, and the curtain was about to rise on Mrs. Bracegirdle or Signor Nicolini and the lion ! How pleasant, too, on summer evenings to be rowed up the Thames to Spring Garden, with the plash of oars and the ripple of the current at the bow, while snatches of song and the sound of merry voices came wafted across the water, and the whole broad bosom of the river glowed and shimmered in the warm rays of the setting sun ! And then, when the last quavers of the singers in the garden had died away, and the lamps were out, and the walks deserted, to drop down the river in the moonshine, to see the lights of London twinkling through the gloom on either bank, and the great Abbey towers standing out black against the lingering glow in the western sky !

" The very sight and sound of the streets, with the throng of foot-passengers, the stream of coaches, and the forest of gaudy signboards shining in the sun and creaking in the wind—it warmed the cockles of his heart to think of them all. And how cheerful in the afternoons to lounge in at Will's or Button's and discuss the latest news of the court or the war over a pot of steaming coffee with that arch-Whig, Dicky Steele, or that solemn prig, Joey Addison, who knew a good glass of wine, by Gad, and could take off his bottle like a man for

all his smug pragmatical airs. And then, just as they were growing warm over the doings in Flanders and the cursed delays of the Allies, to be suddenly called to the door by the excited coffee-man shouting, 'Here he comes! Here he comes!' And to rush to the door and to see the Queen's messenger from Dover, spent with hard riding and all bespattered with mud, spurring through the streets to St. James's, with the people running after him to get the first news! And to stand in the crowd outside the palace while they read the despatches—and to see the window flung open and the placard hung out:

ANOTHER GREAT VICTORY IN THE LOW COUNTRIES

and then the huzzas, and the hats up in the air, and the three-times three and one cheer more, and the bonfires, and the illuminations, and the Tower guns booming out over all, and—— But from these dreams of vanished bliss the old beau was suddenly recalled to the stern realities of life by a shrill voice calling out, 'William! William!' It was Mrs. Honeycomb."

Here the manuscript breaks off abruptly. It is obviously unfinished, for the writer must certainly have meant to tell us what Mrs. Honeycomb had to say to Mr. Honeycomb, together with the outburst of profanity, or rather of tenderness, with which the fond husband met this touching appeal

from the wife of his bosom. Perhaps a further search among the papers of the club may yet enable me to supply the lacuna. Meantime I will only add a few words about another small discovery of a different kind, which I was so fortunate as to make in the course of my laborious researches. It appears highly probable, if not quite certain, that during the period when he was publishing his celebrated papers the Spectator occupied chambers in Staple Inn. So far as I am aware—I write subject to correction—no one in modern years had even guessed at this. The way in which I came to ascertain it, was what, humanly speaking, you might call an accident.

It was one of the hottest afternoons of July in the very hot summer three years ago. I had been stifled with the heat and stunned with the noise of the streets, and had stepped into St. James's Park in search of a little coolness and shade. After strolling about under the trees and admiring the gay flower-beds, then in the full pomp of their midsummer beauty, I sat down on a chair in the shade, and amused myself by watching the swans, with their arched necks, ruffled plumage, and swelling breasts, as they slowly sailed among the water-lilies. The heat made me drowsy, and perhaps I closed my eyes for a minute or two, I cannot say, but certainly when I looked about me again, the park seemed unusually still and deserted for a summer afternoon. Not a living soul was in sight. Just

then I heard a sound of voices and laughter approaching, and looking in the direction from which it proceeded I saw coming along the path toward me two figures which at once attracted and riveted my attention. At first I thought they must be maskers, so rich and varied were the colours of their costume, and so quaint its cut. They wore knee-breeches and shoes with shining buckles; under their broad cocked hats long curled wigs hung down to their shoulders, and they had swords at their sides. One of them was an old man, tall and slender, who carried himself with a certain courtly grace as he turned and stooped slightly towards his companion in lively conversation. He wore a suit of dark purple velvet with gold buttons. The other, a shorter, stouter man, was clad in a suit of bright cherry-colour silk with a profusion of galloons, lace, ribbons, and frills; and as he raised his hand, with a silver snuff-box in it, the sunbeams struck sparkles of fire from the jewelled rings on his fingers. He strutted with so jaunty an air that at first I took him for a young man; but as he drew near, I could see crow's-feet about his eyes, and I fancied I could detect wrinkles under what looked like rouge on his cheeks. They came on, laughing and talking, now in sunshine and now in shadow, till they were close up to me. Instinctively, as they passed, I stood up and raised my hat. The old gentleman, who was next me on the path, turned towards me with a pleasant smile, and as he pulled

off his hat with an air of old-fashioned politeness, the sun shone full on his face, and I knew at once that it was Sir Roger de Coverley. I guessed that his companion was Will Honeycomb, and my curiosity being aroused I followed them at a little distance. They seemed to be concerting a scheme for surprising somebody, which afforded them amusement; for I heard Sir Roger say, as he pulled his watch out of his fob, "Just three o'clock. We are sure to catch him at it, if we go at once." "To be sure," replied Will Honeycomb, "he always speculates at this hour. He'll addle his brains over those cursed books. It's a Christian duty to go and rout him from them." "Well," said Sir Roger, "we'll call a coach in the Mall and go straight to him."

By this time they were come to the gate of the park, and Sir Roger hailed a hackney coach and gave the coachman a direction, which I could not hear; for he was a little way off and had his back to me. I called another coach, and bade the coachman follow the other two gentlemen closely. "The gentleman in violet and the one in rose?" he asked. I nodded, and away we drove, jolting and rattling over the paving-stones. It never struck me before, how very badly the streets of London were laid. The cobbles were such, that at every jolt I thought all the bones of my body would come out of joint. And the streets had a strange and novel appearance. Like the park they were unusually quiet, and the

few passengers I saw were dressed so oddly, the women in great hooped petticoats and bright hoods, with black patches on their faces, and the men in cocked hats, bag-wigs, knee-breeches, and coats of all the colours in the rainbow, with long rapiers dangling at their sides.' Then I was surprised at the number of old black-timbered houses, which somehow I had never noticed before, though they stood out boldly enough with their tall gables projecting over the street, their wooden galleries, their casement windows with little diamond-shaped panes of glass, and their gay signboards flaunting in the sun.

I was still wondering at it all when the coach suddenly drew up, and putting my head out of the window I saw that we were in Holborn, just opposite to Staple Inn. Sir Roger and Will Honeycomb were already on the pavement. They had dismissed their coach and were turning into the Inn. I dismissed my coach also and followed. They passed under the archway with its massive doors, and entered a little cobbled court shaded by tall plane trees. There they sat down on a bench under a tree, seemingly to concert their plans for the intended surprise. I hung back in the shadow of the archway, where I could watch them without being observed. As they sat there chatting in the dappled shade, a fountain plashed hard by with a drowsy murmur, doves were cooing and fluttering, and on the far side of the court, under the thick foliage of the

planes, I could see the hall, its black old walls half mantled in vines and creepers, the sunlight shining softly through the crimson and blue and purple panes of its great oriel.

They were not long of coming to a decision, for Sir Roger soon rose briskly from the bench and led the way across the court to a vaulted passage beside the hall. I followed them, still unnoticed, and passing under the vault emerged on a second court with a small garden, a stretch of greensward, and gay flower-beds, all sleeping peacefully in the heat of the summer afternoon. A flight of stone steps, just opposite us, led up to a terrace overlooking the garden, but instead of ascending them Sir Roger turned sharply to the left, and entering a low doorway mounted a steep wooden staircase with a heavy balustrade of black oak. He led the way on tiptoe, looking back now and then with a smile and a finger on his lip, as if to enjoin silence on his companion. Mr. Honeycomb was by no means so careful, for he coughed and hemmed distinctly twice or thrice, and his sword clattered on the treads of the steps. I noticed, too, that the jaunty air with which he walked on the flat quite deserted him in climbing the staircase; he puffed and wheezed, and, if I am not mistaken, I heard him swear at "those damned steps" under his breath.

On the first landing there were several doors, all of them, like the balustrade, made of massive black oak. Sir Roger turned to the right, and

tapped lightly at one of them. A voice from within answered, in what seemed a peevish tone, "Come in!" so he pushed the door open and entered, followed by Will Honeycomb. Then I heard him say in his high quavering voice, "Still speculating, my dear philosopher? We've come to carry you off to Squire's to drink a dish of coffee with us." "Come along, old cock," I could hear Will Honeycomb adding in his gruffer voice, "the Dutch mail is just come in, and they say there's great news from Flanders. You haven't finished the paper for to-morrow, you say? Curse it, give it to Dicky to finish; he'll scribble it off fast enough, I warrant you. Come along." They had left the door ajar behind them, so I peeped in and got a clear view of the apartment without being perceived, for they all had their backs to me. It was a low but fairly spacious room, wainscoted with some dark wood, perhaps walnut. On the far side was a huge fireplace with a great mantelpiece of carved stone over it. To the left a single window, in a deep embrasure, let in a stream of dusty sunshine, which fell on a writing-table drawn up close to the window. At the table was seated a man plainly dressed in drab with his back to me. He had been writing, for he had just pushed a sheet of paper from him, and I could see that the ink on it was still wet. Sir Roger was standing behind him, with one hand lightly laid on the writer's shoulder, looking down at him and smiling. The writer had turned half round

toward his interlocutors, and from the expression of his face, and the way in which he drummed on the table with his fingers, I judged that he was somewhat impatient of the interruption. At last, as if about to remonstrate with the intruders, he turned full round on them, and, by the broad face, the snub nose, the square jowls, and the settled gravity of his countenance I knew that he could be no other than the Spectator. I was so overjoyed at having tracked him to his den at last, and found him in the very heat of composition, that I could restrain myself no longer, but tapped on the door to announce my presence and introduce myself to their society. But they seemed not to hear me, for they continued their conversation, or, to speak more correctly, Sir Roger and Will Honeycomb continued to talk, while the Spectator sat silent with an air of rather sullen resignation. So I rapped louder, but still they paid no heed. And now the room began to grow dim, and their figures to fade, and their voices to sound very far off. I rubbed my eyes to clear my vision, and when I opened them I found myself again on the chair in St. James's Park. The swans were still swimming lazily among the water-lilies, but the sun was lower in the sky, and the shadows of the trees fell longer across the grass. The park-keeper was tapping me on the shoulder and saying, " A penny for the chair, if you please. You have had a long nap, sir."

I started up, and having paid my penny quitted

the park and hurried back to Staple Inn. The streets, as I passed through them, had resumed the usual aspect of bustle and tumult, which they present on a July afternoon towards the end of the London season. I could see none of the quaint black-timbered houses which had figured so prominently on my recent ride through the city; the excruciating cobbles had disappeared, and the tide of traffic rolled smoothly over the asphalt pavement. I began to think that I must have been dreaming, and that I should find Staple Inn to have vanished like the rest of my vision. But on that point I was soon reassured. For there it was in its old place, just as I had seen it, with its ancient timbered gables overlooking the hurry, and seemingly deaf to the uproar, of Holborn. I again passed under the archway and entered the first court. Yes, there was the very bench under the plane which had been so lately occupied by Sir Roger and Will Honeycomb. There, across the court, was still the old hall with its vines and creepers, and the sunlight streaming through the painted glass of its windows. Again I passed through the vaulted passage beside the hall, and again I found myself in the garden court, with its grass and flower-beds, its terrace and stone steps, all sleeping as before in the drowsy heat of the summer afternoon. But the staircase with the balustrade of black oak was gone, and though I searched for it carefully then and since, I have never been able to find it from

that day to this. Yet I know it must be there, for I saw it, and I shall find it one day, and see Sir Roger again, and Will Honeycomb, and the Spectator there—there or somewhere in the land of dreams.

II

THE SPECTATOR IN THE COUNTRY [1]

COVERLEY HALL, *July 25th*, 1711.

Rura mihi et rigui placeant in vallibus amnes;
Flumina amem silvasque inglorius.—VIRGIL.

THE end of my visit to Sir Roger is now approaching, and I confess that I contemplate my return to town with a degree of regret which I certainly did

[1] On a second visit to Coverley Hall I was able, with the kind permission of my host, to make a fresh search in the archives of the Spectator Club. Among the manuscripts which the editor of *The Spectator* had either rejected or perhaps kept by him on the chance of their serving as stop-gaps when he had nothing better to offer for the entertainment of the day, I found several that seemed to me, in spite of a lack of literary polish, to possess a certain historical or antiquarian interest as illustrative of English life in the days of Queen Anne. Among them I selected four for publication, and now submit them to the judgement of the reader. They are all unsigned, but the handwriting agrees closely with that of the fragment on Will Honeycomb in the country, which I discovered on my first visit to the Hall. Hence I conclude that all five pieces were written by the same hand. In one of them ("Sir Roger in Cambridge") the author plainly declares himself to be an Oxford man, but otherwise he gives no clue to his identity. Apart from a few small changes, which I have made in order to accommodate the spelling to our modern standard, I reproduce the papers exactly as they came into my hands, without corrections or alterations of any kind.—J. G. F.

not expect to feel when I left London for Coverley. In truth, I fall more and more in love with the country. The soft green of fields and meadows, of trees and hedges, the flowery lanes, the winding willow-fringed streams, the prospect of far blue hills, the great expanse of sky, flecked with white summer clouds at noon or kindled into crimson and gold at sunset, the freshness and sweetness of the air, the peace and tranquillity poured like a healing balm over all—these things affect me with a pleasure which I feel deeply but am powerless to express. I begin to think of forswearing the city and retiring far from its smoke and uproar, its fever and fret, to spend the remainder of my days in some rural solitude. If ever I do so, I cannot imagine any spot that would attract me more than Coverley, and if Sir Roger would have me for a tenant, I should be content to take up my abode, with a few favourite books, in a cottage, somewhere within sight of the church steeple peeping out among the old elms, and within the sound of its solemn bells. For to me there is something strangely fascinating in an English village church. The grey time-worn walls, with their mosses and lichens and weather-stains, the very bareness and simplicity of the whitewashed interior with its plain pews and unpretending pulpit, the silence that reigns within when you enter on a week day, the sight of the green leaves fluttering outside in the breeze, the sweet scent of the hawthorn

or the hay blown in upon you through the open windows or door, make up an impression, or rather a series of impressions, well fitted to ease the troubled or jaded mind, to wear away its carking cares, to smooth out, if I may say so, its creases and rumples, in a word, to restore its composure and calm. And the charm of a village church is greatly enhanced when, as here at Coverley, it adjoins an ancient Hall, the two together carrying the mind back into the past, to England of the olden time, which, whether justly or not, in the bustle of modern life we regard with a certain fond regret. The world, we are fain to think, went very well then; though, to be candid, I imagine that if the kindly wizard Time, who spreads enchantment over distant views, were to transport us to those vanished scenes, we might find the spell broken and ourselves disenchanted.

However that may be, the longer I stay at the Hall, the more I love its master. For there is about him a sweet simplicity, a sort of childlike frankness and innocence which wonderfully pleases me and puts me many times in mind of Our Saviour's words, "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." I think I never met one who seemed to me to need less preparation for death and for that communion with the spirits of the just made perfect, to which Scripture teaches us to look forward as a principal source of the happiness that

awaits us in the life hereafter. Not that Sir Roger is either very wise or very witty; for in truth he is neither, unless, as I am sometimes prone to think, the greatest wisdom consists in the greatest purity of the heart, for judged by that standard I would be bold to match Sir Roger against Socrates or any sage in history.

As he has arrived at the time of life when men naturally turn their thoughts to the long past that is behind them rather than to the short and uncertain future before them, Sir Roger loves to recall the memories of his youth, and in this propensity I encourage him, for he has much to tell of stirring scenes that he witnessed in days when England was more agitated than now and had not yet attained to that settled state of internal tranquillity for which we are indebted to the prudence and vigilance of Her present Most Gracious Majesty. He remembers faintly as in a dream the dismal pageantry of the day when the remains of the usurper, who styled himself Protector, were borne, with more than regal solemnity, amid the silence of an innumerable throng, to rest with the dust of kings and princes. He recalls more distinctly and with far greater pleasure, the wild outburst of joy which greeted the return of His Majesty King Charles the Second; how the streets were strewed with flowers and hung with tapestry; how the windows and balconies were crowded with ladies; how bells rang, trumpets blared, and fountains ran wine;

and how the horse and foot, with shouts and brandishing of swords, the Livery Companies with their chains of gold and banners, and lords and nobles clad in cloth of silver and velvet, were passing for hours the place where he stood in the Strand to watch them. As a young man he witnessed the Great Plague and the Great Fire of London, and he well remembers the sad day when the roar of the Dutch guns in the Thames was heard like the rumble of thunder all over the city, the people in a dreadful suspense crowding into the streets to listen, till the sullen sound of the firing drew farther and farther off, and finally died away in the distance.

Yesterday Sir Roger was in a particularly communicative vein. The day was hot, and in the afternoon we walked out through the fields by a footpath beside a high hedge and in the dappled shade of a long row of venerable elms; then crossing a meadow and passing through the churchyard of a little hamlet, where the grassy mounds and mossy headstones basked in the sunshine among ancient yews, we ascended the slope of a hill by a track that led through tall wheat, now turned a rich russet brown and spangled with scarlet poppies. Thus ascending we reached the brow of the hill and struck a high road which here runs for miles along the crest of the ridge, skirted on the one side by a wood and on the other hand affording wide views down the declivity and away over the flat

country to some low blue hills which bound the prospect in the far distance. Just on the brow of the hill there stands a ruinous old windmill, its timbers rotting and its great sails drooping like the wings of a wounded bird. Here on a bench we sat down to rest and to enjoy the freshness of the air on the height before retracing our steps homeward. The landscape spread out before us was peaceful and pleasing. At our feet the high road ran steeply down the slope, and where it passed out of sight we could still trace its line by the trees that fringed it on either side, rising and sinking like a green wave with the undulations of the ground. Away to the north, faintly discernible as specks on the horizon, appeared the towers of a minster, but so far off that they would have escaped me if Sir Roger had not pointed them out. In the foreground, but still at a distance of several miles, we could see the woods of Coverley, and just over the edge of the hill the spire of the little village church which we had passed before ascending the slope. On the side of the distant blue hills, beyond the woods of Coverley, my friend bade me mark what looked like a white scar; he said it was the high road to Oxford.

Charmed, as it were, by the prospect we sat a long time, and Sir Roger chatted of other days, while I listened spellbound, till the sun, sinking in the west, stretched out the shadows on the slope of the hill and reminded us that it was time to return.

So, rising reluctantly, we descended the hill and followed the high road back to Coverley. What the old knight told me, as we sat there that summer evening, will long remain imprinted on my memory, and may furnish matter for the future entertainment of my readers. But their patience, like my paper, is no doubt exhausted, and I will not tax it further to-day.

III

SIR ROGER IN CAMBRIDGE

I DO not know that I have anywhere mentioned that Sir Roger de Coverley, though he is not himself learned, has a very great—I may even say an excessive—respect for learning and learned men. I have seen him stand, hat in hand, in Fleet Street speaking deferentially to a common scribbler, a literary hack, who had just descended from his garret in Grub Street, where he earns his bread in the sweat of his brow by lampooning the most eminent characters and belauding the basest for any man who will hire his services at a shilling a sheet. If I mistake not, the fellow has stood in the pillory more than once for his scurrilous libels, and has received the tribute of public esteem for his talents in the shape of dead cats and rotten eggs, which to him are what laurels and ivy are to writers of a different stamp. Very much astonished, I can assure you, he seemed to be when the baronet bent low (the wretch is a squat, dumpy little man, and Sir Roger is tall and slender) to catch the words of

wisdom that trickled and spluttered in a thick voice from his grimy, bristly lips; for this literary oracle has an impediment in his speech, appears to suffer from a chronic catarrh, and I much doubt whether he washes and shaves more than once a fortnight. He was plainly ill at ease under the old knight's attentions, shuffled with his feet, cast furtive glances about him all the time, as if he expected to see a bailiff turning the corner of the next street to nab him for his score at the alehouse, and experienced an obvious relief when, the meeting over, he could slink back to his garret, there to resume his congenial task of blackening virtue and whitewashing vice. "A great writer, I believe," said Sir Roger, looking after him, "a great writer! though I could wish he would pay more heed to his linen. But I suppose his head is too full of learning to attend to such things."

Sir Roger himself is a man of very few books, and knows little about our modern authors. I do not believe he has so much as heard the name of Mr. Pope, who in the last few years has taught our English numbers to flow with a mellifluous cadence they never knew before. I once spoke of Milton to him, but he shook his head. "John Milton," he said, "John Milton. Yes, I have heard of the rascal. A regicide, sir, a regicide! He might thank his stars that His Gracious Majesty King Charles (God bless him!) did not bring his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. No, sir, don't talk

to me about that canting crop-eared cur!" He grew so warm that I was fain to turn the conversation by hurriedly mentioning Lovelace and Cowley, who, I knew, as Cavaliers, stood high in Sir Roger's good graces. The cloud at once passed from the old knight's brow and gave place to a beaming smile. "Gentlemen of sound principles, both of them," said he, "and very good poets too, I'll be bound. No man, sir, can write good poetry who has not a proper respect for Church and King. But as for John what-do-ye-call-him, that snivelling, glum-faced son of a——" He was about to burst out again on the sore subject of Milton, when I dexterously interposed the name of Herrick, and again the knight's passion calmed down as suddenly as it had risen. For in Sir Roger's youth Herrick's verses were at the height of the fashion; he had learned many of them by heart, and set them on the same lofty pedestal with Baker's *Chronicle*, which is the only other book I ever heard him quote with approval. I had struck the right key. He hummed to himself some of the poet's lines—I caught something about love and fleeting youth and fading roses, and saw by his eye that his thoughts had wandered far away to other days and distant scenes; perhaps he was young again, roaming the hawthorn lanes and cowslip meadows of Worcestershire on a sunshiny day in spring, or lingering in the twilight on the willow-fringed banks of Severn, to mark the red autumnal sun setting in mist beyond

the Welsh mountains. When he came to himself at length, he had recovered all his usual placidity and serenity of temper; Milton and the other crop-eared curs were quite forgotten.

As his journeys to and from Worcestershire take him through Oxford, he is well acquainted with that famous city, and a warm admirer of it, though I have never been able to determine exactly whether it is the learning or the loyalty of the place that excites his admiration in the higher measure; for in his references to it he hardly seems to distinguish between these claims of the University town to public gratitude. His father attended King Charles the First when he held his court at Oxford, and Sir Roger has many stories to tell of the monarch's gracious demeanour to the scholars and learned men: how he dined with them in the college halls, and prayed with them in the college chapels; how, on summer afternoons, he strolled with them in the cloisters of Magdalen, or played at bowls with them in the gardens of St. John's; and how, when he rode out of the town for the last time, before the battle of Naseby, he was attended to the gate by the Vice-Chancellor, the Heads of Houses, and the Doctors of Divinity, all in scarlet, who did homage to him and bade him God-speed before he mounted his horse. Then he leaped into the saddle, the music struck up, and the whole cavalcade was in motion. As he rode away he turned once more in the stirrups to wave a good-bye to the loyal

city he was never to set eyes on again; and the doctors in their red gowns at the gate stood gazing after him and shading their eyes with their hands, till the last of the cavalcade disappeared in a cloud of dust, and the music died away in the distance. Such are the reminiscences which Sir Roger loves to relate of Oxford. But as for the dusty libraries and the wrangling disputations of that seat of learning, he has little to say about them.

I have frequently had occasion to mention the Templar, a gentleman of some reading and still greater pretensions in polite letters, who is a member of our club, and there lays down the law on all questions of taste with a confidence which I envy, though I cannot always share. As he was bred at Cambridge he has a partiality, which I do not blame, for that University, to which he would award—in my humble opinion, very unjustly—the palm of antiquity and renown above its rival on the banks of the Isis. Accordingly, when Sir Roger alludes to the glories of Oxford, the Templar is apt to vaunt what he considers the superior glories of Cambridge, and seems nettled if any member of the Club disputes its claim to pre-eminence. As for Sir Roger, while he regards Oxford with affection, he has long looked on Cambridge with deep distrust as the breeding-place of that most pernicious varlet, Oliver Cromwell. To abate his prejudice on this head the Templar proposed, a few days ago, that Sir Roger and he should visit Cambridge to-

gether, assuring our friend that if he only saw the place he would like it as well as Oxford, or rather better; besides, knowing the knight's profound reverence for the very name of learning, he artfully held out as a bait the prospect of his making the acquaintance of a scholar, who, if we may believe the Templar, is one of the most learned and celebrated men in Europe. This had a visible effect on Sir Roger, and after a little hesitation he agreed to undertake the journey, only bargaining that the philosopher, as he calls me, should make one of the party. I readily agreed to the proposal, for, having had the misfortune (as the Templar would think it) to be bred at the sister University, I had never visited Cambridge, and felt some curiosity to see a place about which I had heard so much. So it was agreed that we should meet next morning at the Rainbow, in Holborn, from which the coach plies to Cambridge.

We met next morning, as agreed, at the Rainbow. Sir Roger was attended by his butler, armed with holster pistols for fear of highwaymen, who had been on the road about Royston three days before. I need not trouble my readers with an account of the journey. It passed off without adventure. We saw nothing of the highwaymen—at least, of the live ones—for we passed two dead ones hanging in chains on a gibbet a little way beyond Hatfield. Towards the end of the day Sir Roger grew weary and fell asleep, but about dusk he was roused by the

sound of church bells, and, putting our heads out of the window, we saw the lights of Cambridge in the distance. As we rode into the town all the bells in the steeples seemed to be jangling to welcome us; the clangour was almost deafening. The Templar told us that this was the curfew, which is still rung in Cambridge every evening, as it has been rung since the days of William the Conqueror. It was dark when we rattled into the courtyard of the Red Lion. We could see nothing but some tall gables faintly outlined against the sky and a long wooden gallery, dimly lighted by a few spluttering oil-lamps, which appeared to run round the yard.

Next morning we were up betimes, and, having broken our fast, we prepared to sally forth. The Templar addressed us with some solemnity. "Gentlemen," said he, "I shall conduct you first to my own college, the college of the Holy and Undivided Trinity. It is the greatest college in either University." At this point I was seized with a violent fit of coughing. The Templar paused, and, looking hard at me, "I hope, sir," says he, somewhat tartly, "that you do not mean to dispute that proposition?" "Not at all, sir; not at all," I stuttered between the fits; "but I am afflicted with a chronic cough, which always seizes me, I do not know why, whenever I hear the name of Trinity College, Cambridge. Many Oxford men, I believe, suffer in the same way." "Well," resumed the Templar, "as I was saying, when I was interrupted

by our suffering friend, I am about to carry you to Trinity College and to make you known to the Master, Dr. B-ntl-y. He is unquestionably the greatest scholar in Christendom." Here I was again overtaken by a fit of coughing more violent than before. At that the Templar seemed to lose patience, and, snatching up his hat, "Gentlemen," he cried, "follow me. I will lead the way." He did so, and, tripping at his heels, we descended into the courtyard and passed out into the street. I know not what devil possessed me, but no sooner were we in the street than I turned sharp to the right and had taken a few steps in that direction when the Templar ran after me and, laying his hand on my shoulder, "For God's sake, sir," says he, "don't go that way." "And why not, sir?" I asked, with some surprise. "Because, sir," says he, "that is the way to Christ's College and Sidney Sussex College." As I still looked bewildered, he clapt his mouth to my ear and whispered hoarsely, "The college of Milton and the college of Oliver Cromwell! Sir Roger would rather be blasted by lightning than put his foot inside either of them." I understood at once. We turned back and rejoined Sir Roger, who had happily noticed and overheard nothing, being occupied in his daily exercise of clearing his pipes, as he calls it, in the fresh morning air and contemplating with great satisfaction the novel scenes around him. We now saw, what the darkness of the night before had prevented us from

perceiving, that the street was very narrow, and was straitened still more by the projecting gables of the houses, which seemed as if they would meet overhead. I confess I was a little disgusted to behold so many relics of the barbarous taste of Queen Elizabeth's day, with their heavy black timbers and their cramped little lattice-windows and their diamond-shaped panes of bottle-green glass. How painfully these Gothic antiquities, as I may call them, contrasted with a few of those neat square houses of red brick which have so happily come into fashion in our own time, and particularly under the glorious reign of Her present Majesty.

From this street, which I think they call Petty Cury, we turned into a large open square. "This," said the Templar, "is the market-place." Indeed, we could see for ourselves that it was so, for it was covered with booths, where hucksters were busy selling their wares. The stalls, with their display of flowers, fruit, vegetables, and so forth, made a pretty enough show in the sunshine, for it was a fine morning. Thence we threaded our way through a labyrinth of narrow streets, or, rather, lanes, all overhung by the same unsightly protruding houses, which blocked out the sunlight and threatened to fall on our heads. At last, emerging from these alleys, we came to a great arched gateway, flanked by tall embattled towers, with many coats-of-arms blazoned on its grey, time-worn front. "This is Trinity," said the Templar, shortly. I think he

was in a huff, and feared to set me off coughing again. So, without giving us time to scrutinize the scutcheons, he led us through the archway into the court. A spacious enough court it was, I am free to admit, with a great expanse of grass, a fountain playing among flower-beds in the centre, the hall with its tall oriel on the opposite side, and the chapel with its long line of buttresses on our right.

Hardly allowing us leisure to look around, the Templar led, or, rather, hurried, us across the court to a porch, where he knocked at a door. A venerable manservant opened. "Is the Master at home?" asked the Templar. "He is, sir," answered the servant, "but does he expect you?" "He does," replied the Templar; "I wrote to him, and have his answer." "Then come this way, sir," said the butler. He led us up a stately staircase and ushered us into the Master's study, a large, wainscoted chamber, partly lined with bookcases, and lighted by several tall windows that looked out on the court by which we had entered. The room was empty, and we had to wait a few minutes. Then we heard voices approaching, the door opened, and the Master stood before us, a tall, burly figure in cap and gown. Behind him trotted a little man of deferential manners, whom the Master introduced to us as the Vice-Master, Mr. Walker, and to whom he handed his cap. "Sir Roger," said the Master, "I am glad to make your acquaintance. On my journeys to Worcester,

where my duties as prebendary take me for two months every summer, I have often passed your gates." "Then I hope, sir," interposed Sir Roger, "that the next time you come down you will do me the honour of paying a visit to the Hall." "I shall be happy to do so, sir," replied the Master, with great suavity; "I shall be very happy to do so. Sir Roger, you have a good name in the county as a staunch Churchman and a loyal subject. In these days of atheism and sedition—I leave you, sir, as a layman to apply the appropriate epithets to those pests of our time—I say, sir, in these days of sedition and atheism, it is a pleasure to make the acquaintance of a gentleman of such sound principles. I shall be happy to visit you at Coverley."

This gracious acceptance of his invitation quite won Sir Roger's heart, and he prattled like a child, the Master listening to him with a benevolent, almost fatherly smile, his massive brow unbent, and what I thought must be the habitual sternness of his expression sensibly relaxed. It was surprising to see how these two men, apparently so different, drew to each other; it was almost as if they had conceived a sudden and mutual affection. I have said that Sir Roger looks up to learned men with a genuine reverence; this time he had to do with a scholar indeed, and no sham. The Master felt and accepted the homage paid from the heart to his profound learning; he basked, as it were, in an autumnal sunshine, for time has grizzled his dark locks, and

furrowed his cheeks. I watched the two men with interest, for they made a picture, sitting there together in the sunshine at the window that looked out on the Great Court. But my thoughts wandered, and I hardly heeded what they said. However, from scraps of their talk I gathered that Sir Roger was telling the Master about Coverley, and relating some of his best stories about the ghosts at the Hall, and how the chaplain laid them, especially that good old ghost with the bloody hand and the clanking chains—oh, Lord, how often I have endured him—and Moll White and her witcheries —that old, old story about the buttermilk and the broomstick—and so on, and so on.

At last the Master seemed to recollect himself, and, pulling out his watch, he started and said, "Gentlemen, I am sorry I must leave you. I had an appointment with the Regius Professor of Greek at eleven o'clock, and I see that it is now nearly half-past. I had not perceived how the time was going." "The Regius Professor of Greek!" repeated Sir Roger, in an awe-stricken voice. "A very great scholar, I'll be bound, sir." "So-so, sir; so-so," answered the Master, frowning slightly and pursing his lips—the smile had quite gone out of his face by this time; "he has his limitations, sir, as I suppose we all have. I should be surprised, sir, to learn that he could distinguish between the hands of John and Isaac Tzetzes in the scholia on Lycophron. His views on

the digamma in Homer are most unsound, most unsound; and would you believe it, sir—it seems incredible, but it is true—that he once wrote a copy of anapaestic verse in which he disregarded—actually disregarded—the synaphea?" "God bless my soul!" cried Sir Roger, quite shocked, "you don't say so?" "But I do, though," said the Master, "Walker, is it not so?" The Vice-Master had been gazing abstractedly out of the window, absorbed in the contemplation of two young men engaged in the last round of a single combat on the grass plot outside. Thus suddenly recalled to his duty, he turned hastily round, saying, "Certainly, Master, certainly, without question it is so. You are undoubtedly right." "You hear what the Vice-Master says, gentlemen," said the Master; "yes, yes, in his poetical afflatus Joshua forgot all about the synaphea! Ha! ha! ha! He completely forgot the synaphea!"[1] He leaned back in his chair, laughing heartily. Then he rose,

[1] "The allusion is no doubt to Joshua B-rn-es, the present learned incumbent of the Greek Chair at Cambridge, whose recent edition of Homer has made a great stir in the world of letters. If we are not misinformed, there has been more than one passage of arms between him and Dr. B-ntl-y, which may account for the asperity with which the doctor appears to treat his rival in the domain of scholarship. We hear that in private life Dr. B. ridicules the opinion of Professor B. that the *Iliad* was written by King Solomon, and that he does not stick to assert that the professor choused his wife of her money by inducing her to sink it all in his 'putid' edition of Homer under the unalterable persuasion of the poet's personal identity with the Hebrew monarch. But into these peddling disputes of the learned we do not care to descend."—(*Note to the MS., apparently not intended for publication.*—J. G. F.)

saying hurriedly, "But I must be gone. Gentlemen, I wish you good day. Sir Roger, I am your very humble servant," with a deep bow. "Mr. So-and-So" (naming the Templar), "your servant," with a bow. Then, turning to me, and barely inclining his tall figure, he added with a jerk, "Good morning, sir. Walker, my hat!" The Vice-Master handed him the cap reverentially, and, followed by his obsequious attendant, the Master stalked majestically away.

IV

SIR ROGER IN COVENT GARDEN

Sir Roger de Coverley is now in town, and he spent an evening with us at the club two days ago. But he left us before it grew late; "For," says he, "you know I am a country bird; I go early to roost." When he had gone, one of the company remarked: "I daresay Sir Roger did not always keep such early hours. They say he was a gay fellow in his youth. What is that story about him and a woman of the town?"

"Sir Roger and a woman of the town!" cried Sir Andrew Freeport hotly, "nonsense! I do not believe that he ever spoke to one in his life or would know one of the poor creatures if he saw her."

"As to the speaking," interposed Will Honeycomb, "you are wrong. I was with him when he spoke with one, and by Gad I shall remember the occasion as long as I live." "How was it? Tell us," we all asked. "I am the less likely to forget it," answered Will Honeycomb, "because it was the very first day I ever met Sir Roger, and that

was not yesterday, I can tell you. I was a young man then—that is to say, I—I—I mean, I was—" "Yes, yes," we interrupted, laughing, "we quite understand. You were even younger then than you are now."

"Well, that's true, anyhow," answered Will, with a rather rueful smile; "but to go on with my story. A common friend had made us known to each other at the Rainbow, and we agreed to go to the play at Covent Garden together. When we came out of the theatre, I offered to conduct him to his lodgings in St. James's Street. The night was dark, and somehow we came to speak of the Mohocks. They had been out in force two nights before, and, having caught a gentleman in a lane off Fleet Street, they slit his nose from end to end, gouged out both his eyes, and left him to grope his way home blind, all because, being a man of spirit, he had refused to take off his hat to them. 'Well,' says Sir Roger, 'I hope they won't catch us. I have no mind to have my nose slit.' 'No,' says I, 'it's a handsome nose; it would be a pity to spoil it. And, for my part, I don't wish to lose my eyes neither. But I think we are pretty safe. They have doubled the watch.'

"Just then we turned the corner of a street (I think it was King Street) and perceived at once that something was wrong. For a crowd had gathered, and we heard screams. Some hackney-coaches were drawn up, and the coachmen were standing

on the seats, looking over the heads of the people, and laughing and pointing at something. We mended our pace and made up to them, and soon saw what was the matter. It was the Mohocks, and an uglier set of them I never clapped eyes on, for I noticed Lord Mohun among them, and that black cut-throat Captain Macartney. They had got a woman of the town—a common trullion—among them. I don't know what they had been doing to her, but she was down on the pavement with her face to the wall, screaming and sobbing. The moment Sir Roger saw that, he pressed violently forward. I tried to hold him back, for I knew it was as much as his life and mine were worth to meddle with these ruffians—there must have been near a score of them; but he shook me off, broke through the crowd, planted himself in front of the woman with his face to them all, and drew his sword. And there he was, I do assure you, giving point to the whole murderous gang of them and saying—or trying to say, for he could hardly speak for passion (it was the only time I ever saw Sir Roger angry)—he was saying: 'If —if any of you d-d-dare to touch this—this lady, by God, I'll run him through the body.' And he would have done it, too; and they knew it, for they fell back, cowed and muttering.

"When Sir Roger saw that they would not come on, he put up his sword and, turning to the woman, took off his hat and made her a low bow.

'Madam,' says he, 'may I have the honour of conducting you to a coach?' She got up, dried her eyes, and took his arm. At that some of the fellows began to laugh and jeer, but one of them—I think it was Lord Mohun—recognized him and cried out, 'Why, it's Sir Roger de Coverley! Gentlemen, form line for the dance—Sir Roger de Coverley!' They fell into two lines at once, drew their swords, crossed them overhead with a clash—I think I can hear it now—and down the middle marched Sir Roger, with his hat under one arm, and the woman clinging to the other, as if he had been escorting a duchess at Court.

"When they came to a coach, he put her in, and, having inquired where she wished to go to, he directed the coachman, paid him, and stood bare-headed, bowing, while she drove away. Then he put on his hat, and turned to the Mohocks. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'I thank you for your courtesy. If any of you feels himself disobliged by what I have done, I am at his service. I am to be found at my lodgings in St. James's Street.' But they cried out, 'No, no! Bravo, youngster! Bravo! Well done, Sir Roger!' and some of them clapped their hands and called out, 'Ancora! ancora!' So I took his arm and we walked away together. He was all of a tremble with excitement, but he walked very stately till we had turned the corner and were out of sight of the crowd. Then, blast my eyes, if he did not burst out crying! And I, I," here Will faltered—

" well, I was near blubbering myself." There was silence in the club. No one spoke, till Will cleared his voice, which had grown husky, and added: " And you may take my word for it, that was the first and the last time that ever Sir Roger spoke to a woman of the town."

V

SIR ROGER IN THE TEMPLE

The last time Sir Roger de Coverley was at the club the talk fell, I know not how, on music. "Who is this Handel," he asked, "of whom everybody is speaking? They say he plays divinely on the organ. I should like to hear him." "There is nothing easier," replied the Templar; "he is to play the organ at the evening service in the Temple Church to-morrow. Will you come? I cannot myself stay for the service, but I will see that you get a good seat." To this proposal Sir Roger readily assented, and as I lost no opportunity of being with the good old man whenever he was in town, I begged to be allowed to join him. So it was agreed that we should meet on the morrow in the Templar's chambers a little before the hour of service, and that he should conduct us to the church and leave us there. We met next day accordingly. I never saw Sir Roger in better health and spirits. He talked gaily, and we fell in with his cheerful mood. We even ventured to rally him on the

widow, and he took it in very good part. "Well, well," he said, "I sometimes think she will have me after all. But I begin to grow an old fellow—an old fellow." We stoutly denied the imputation, and insisted that on the contrary he grew younger every day. Having dissipated the slight shade of melancholy which dimmed for a moment the habitual serenity of our friend, we sallied forth with him to stroll for a little in the garden before repairing to the church.

How well I remember it all now, though years have come and gone since then! It was a calm bright day in September, but already a few yellow leaves were drifting silently to the ground. In the court on which we issued doves were fluttering and cooing, and a fountain was plashing in the dappled shade of some ancient elms. Descending a broad flight of stone steps, we entered the garden. The beds were still gay with the rich hues of autumn, Michaelmas daisies and marigolds vying with the statelier sunflowers and hollyhocks. When we had admired them, "Come," said the Templar, "I will show you *rosa quo locorum sera moretur*." He led the way into a little thicket, where sure enough was a rose tree with some red roses still blowing fresh and sweet among the leaves. "They say, you know," he reminded us, "that in this very garden the Princes of York and Lancaster plucked the white and red roses that were to be the badges of their rival houses, and that gave their name to

the Wars of the Roses." "Aye, aye," said Sir Roger, "and the red rose was the fitter emblem of the two; for they say that your white rose will never bloom on ground where blood has been spilt. You may plant a white rose tree on a battlefield, but next summer all the roses on it will blow red."

When we seemed to doubt the truth of this axiom in natural history, Sir Roger earnestly assured us that it was so. "Why, to prove it," says he, "my friend Sir Richard Devereux, of the Life Guards, was with his regiment at the bloody battle of Landen, and next year, when he chanced to pass by the place, the whole battlefield was nothing but a great sheet of red poppies. He never saw such a blaze of scarlet in his life, not even at a review in Hyde Park." "And then the crimson wall-flower," said the Templar, willing to chime in with the old man's fancy, "everybody knows that it is called Bloody Warriors because it grows on fields of blood." "To be sure, to be sure," rejoined Sir Roger, "in my country it blooms nowhere so well as on the battlefield of Tewkesbury. Many and many a time have I seen it there on a summer's day as I have been riding past. That's the truth. But as for what the poet Herrick says about red roses, I never could believe it." "Why, what does he say about them?" we both asked, curious to elicit the knight's opinion on a point of poetry. "Well, I am not sure that I remember the verses," he replied, "though I used to sing them when I was a young

man. I learned them from my mother, when she walked with me in the rose garden, and I once sang them there," he added, dropping his voice and looking grave, "to *her*." We knew whom he meant by *her*, and did not press him further. A vision of the rose garden at Coverley Hall, and a summer twilight, and Sir Roger pacing there with the widow, rose before my mind, and I remained silent. Rousing himself from a reverie into which he had fallen, Sir Roger went on, "Let me see, let me see,

Roses at first were white—

Oh, yes, I remember them now." And he recited in lilting tones and a high cracked voice—I think I can hear him now and see him as he stood, with the sunshine on his face, smiling and beating time with his hand:

Roses at first were white,
Till they could not agree
Whether my Sappho's breast
Or they more white should be.

But being vanquished quite,
A blush their cheeks bespread:
Since which, believe the rest,
The roses first came red.

When he had done, the Templar pulled some of the red roses and offered them to Sir Roger, who stuck them in his hat, saying: "If you will give me a slip of that rose-bush I will plant it in the

garden at Coverley, and next summer you shall come and gather the roses. Aye, and I will show you the Bloody Warriors on the field of Tewkesbury too. You will believe me then. I know you gentlemen of the law are hard to persuade. But you shall see for yourself, you shall see for yourself."

In such discourse we whiled away an idle half-hour till the failing light reminded us that the time of service was at hand. So we quitted the garden and made our way through the darkening courts to the church. In the trees overhead the starlings were settling to roost with a clamorous chattering, which, Sir Roger told us, was their evensong of praise. Passing through the church porch we entered the oldest part of the ancient edifice, the original round church of the Templars, where the warrior knights lie under their stone effigies on the pavement. Sir Roger and I were putting some questions in a whisper to our friend the Templar concerning these quaint figures, lying there so still after all these ages with their upturned faces and clasped swords, when the organ began to play. So soft and sweet and solemn were the notes that the words died away on our lips, and we followed our friend as he beckoned us forward into the inner part of the church. There he ushered us into a stall beside a pillar and left us. The twilight was now deepening into night, the hour of all the day best fitted to compose the mind to serious thought and the offices of religion. The candles were

already lit in the church, but even without their glimmering flames we could still dimly discern the interlacing arches of the vaulted roof, the rows of tall clustered columns, and between them the saints and prophets on the windows, showing in faint splendour of purple and crimson and blue against the dying light of day. The service of our English Church, beautiful at all times, seemed to me doubly beautiful in these surroundings. Above all, the ravishing sweetness of the music was such as I had never heard before. The voices of the choir blent in a sort of seraphic harmony with the deep long-drawn notes of the organ, now pealing out in a storm of triumphant exultation and joy, now dying away, as it seemed, into depths of ineffable distance. It was such music as souls in bliss might make around the throne for ever. Our hearts melted within us, and, conscious of my own unworthiness, I felt like a lost spirit at the gate of Paradise listening to the angels' song.

When the service was over, we knelt for a few moments side by side, while the solemn strains of the organ, touched by a master's hand, still rolled through the dimly lighted church. As my friend remained somewhat longer than usual at his devotions, I stole a look at him, and seeing him with his silvery hair, his clasped hands, and a look as of rapture on his venerable face, I could not but fancy myself kneeling beside a saint in heaven. We rose solemnized by the scene and by the beautiful service

to which we had just listened. When we passed out of the porch it was night and the moon had risen, making, with the dark outlines of the church, its still lighted windows, and the painted saints glowing on the panes, a picture which long dwelt in my memory. We walked together in silence to Fleet Street. As he was about to leave me, "Do you know," he said, "I have a fancy that when you and I part for the last time, I should wish it to be just thus." I was too moved to reply, and could only shake him silently by the hand. He lifted his hat, with the red roses still in it, and walked away. I do not know how it was; perhaps his words had struck a note of foreboding in my mind, but a sense of uneasiness and sadness came over me, and I noticed with a sort of apprehension that the roses in his hat drooped and had lost some of their petals. I stood bareheaded, watching him till he disappeared in the shadows. I never saw him again. It was my last parting with Sir Roger. But I humbly trust that we may meet again in a world beyond the shadows, where roses never fade and friends shall part no more.

II

THE QUEST OF THE GORGON'S HEAD

A FANTASIA

THE QUEST OF THE GORGON'S HEAD

A FANTASIA

Once upon a time, long, long ago, there was a king who had a beautiful daughter. But before she was born a magician had told the king that, when she grew up, she would be the mother of a boy who would kill the king, his grandfather, and rule over many lands. So the king said, "She shall never marry," and he shut her up when she was quite a little girl in a high tower on the top of a lonely mountain. Years rolled on, and the princess grew to be as beautiful as the sun, but still she was kept in the high lonely tower, and her father would not hear of her going out. Well, one day she was sitting and looking out of the window, wondering whether any prince would ever come to free and marry her, when she heard a strange noise overhead, and looking up she saw that gold, real shining gold, was pouring through a hole in the roof and falling in a heap on the floor. Up she jumped, and spread out her skirt to catch it, till her lap was full. Then a voice, a sweet strange voice, cried, "Fairy gold,

fairy gold, and a fairy's bride," and with that all the gold vanished away, and she was left standing and holding out her empty lap. Then she sat down and cried, for she did not understand that the gold was fairy gold, and that she was a fairy's bride.

Well, spring passed and summer passed, and when the leaves in the forest were turning yellow and red, and the swallows were gathering in flocks and twittering before they flew away, her baby was born. But her father was angry and said, "You must go away, you and the brat." So he led her down to the seashore, her and the child. It was night. Dark clouds hid the sky, the wind sighed in the branches overhead, and the cold water lapped at their feet. A little shallop was tossing on the waves. The king drew it in, and put his daughter and the child into it, and pushed it away. Out the little boat drifted to sea, sad at heart sat the mother clasping her sleeping babe to her breast. Its red cloak fluttered in the wind, the spray dashed over it, but it slept peacefully, smiling in its sleep. It seemed as if some angel watched over the mother and her child, for soon the wind fell, the moon broke through the flying clouds, and down a broad path of shimmering silver floated the little boat, a black speck tossing on the moonlit sea.

At break of day a fisherman, putting out to cast his nets, found the shallop with its precious freight. Touched with pity he took the mother and child to his home. Now he was a good man and feared

God, and his wife was like-minded. They were thrifty, too, and had saved a little money; so after consulting together they proposed to buy a cottage for Danaë (for that was the princess's name) at the end of the fishing village where they lived. But Danaë said no, after that dreadful night she could never bear to look at the sea again. So it was arranged that she should go to live at a village up among the hills where the fisherman had friends. Here, with the help of the kind neighbours, a cottage was bought for her. It stood at the edge of a wood where the nightingales sang in summer. Its walls were overgrown with vines, sweet-briar, and eglantine: the swallows built their nests in the broad thatched eaves of the high-pitched roof; and behind it bickered a brook, where water-lilies grew and broad sedge with its yellow flowers. Here the mother lived, earning a livelihood for herself and her boy by spinning; and in this quiet retreat the years passed peacefully and happily away.

The king of the country was Polydectes, a wicked and cruel man. His evil doings used to furnish the theme of thrilling tales told to awe-struck listeners by many a cottage fire on winter nights. But his castle was far away and the villagers knew of his bad deeds only by hearsay.

In time the boy, whose name was Perseus, grew to be a handsome youth and a great help and comfort to his mother. None of the village lads was a match for him in strength and speed; but he used

his strength not to oppress but to protect the weak and helpless, and all the bullies for miles round feared and hated him, for there was not one of them that had not felt the weight of his hand.

One day, it was a day in autumn—how well they both remembered it afterwards—the mother and son had been out together in the wood gathering sticks for the fire, and were sitting down at the side of the path to rest, when a pack of hounds in full cry dashed past, closely followed by the huntsmen. The foremost of these had already galloped past and disappeared, when a second group appeared riding more leisurely. In the centre rode one whose rich dress and magnificent horse at once arrested the eye. Perseus, who had once been at the palace, immediately recognized the splendid horseman. "It is His Majesty," he said, and stood up, and his mother with him. As the king was riding past, he caught sight of the mother and son, and reined up abruptly. He was a middle-aged man, sinewy and well-built. His oval, clean-shaven face was of a dark olive complexion; his features keen, mobile, expressive; his deeply-set eyes large, black, penetrating. Thin iron-grey hair floated lightly about his temples.

"Who are these?" he demanded of one of the riders, who by the sober cut of his garments seemed to be a secretary or minister. "Please, your Majesty," was the reply, "only a spinster of the village we have just passed and her son." The

king turned his bold black eyes on Danaë till she hung her head and blushed. "On my word, a notable wench," he said. "And you, Sir Whipper-Snapper," he continued, addressing Perseus, "who are you?" "My name is Perseus, and I am your Majesty's most humble servant." "A courtier in fustian!" laughed the king; "why, Glaucus," he went on, turning to an exquisite in his suite, "you couldn't have said it yourself with a grander air than this chawbacon." He laughed again, and the laugh was echoed by the obsequious courtiers; but the hot blood rushed to Perseus' face. The king remained silent for a little, tapping his riding-boot meditatively with his whip and bending his keen gaze alternately on mother and son. At last he abruptly resumed the conversation at the point where it had been broken off. "Fine words, young man," he said, "but will you make them good?" "With my life, your Majesty," was the reply. The king smiled a smile that was not pleasant to look at. "I don't ask so much as that," said he, "but I should like to have the head of the Gorgon Medusa. Will you get it for me?" At the dreaded name a thrill visibly ran through the group of courtiers. Danaë clasped her son's arm convulsively and tried to look in his face beseechingly, but his eyes were fixed on the king; he had drawn himself up to his full height; he was pale now except for a red spot on either cheek. "I will try, your Majesty," was all he said. "Good,

I will reward you. Come, gentlemen," said the king, breaking off, "we have fallen behind. Let us rejoin the hunt." And without deigning another look at Perseus or his mother, he put spurs to his horse and the whole band soon clattered out of sight.

No sooner were they gone than Danaë fell on her son's neck, weeping and imploring him not to attempt the perilous task. But all her prayers and entreaties were in vain. He had passed his word, the youth said, and he would never go back upon it; the king should see what stuff he was made of. "Besides, mother," he added in a softer tone, "the king said he would reward me. He will give me heaps of money or a place at court; and then, you know, you will never need to wear your eyes out over that spinning any more." Finding that all remonstrances were fruitless, his mother dried her eyes and resigned herself to the inevitable. She had a brave spirit, too, as became the daughter of a long line of kings; so when she saw that her son was resolved, she set herself, with a courage like his own, to conceal her heart-breaking sorrow lest it should distress and unman him, and to do everything in her power to cheer and encourage him. It was a sad evening in the little cottage beside the wood. The few preparations were soon made, and then mother and son sat hand in hand talking long and earnestly.

Next morning at daybreak he set out. His

mother accompanied him to the garden gate, and there they parted. Neither said much, their hearts were too full. When he looked back from the turn in the road which would carry him out of sight, she was still standing at the gate looking after him; the roses that twined about the rustic arch were above her head and their shadow on her face.

The morning air was fresh and exhilarating, yet blent with that subtle, inexpressible breath of decay which saddens even the loveliest autumn mornings as with a regret for departed summer or a presage of approaching winter. Setting his face westward, Perseus walked briskly on. He had soon passed through the dear, familiar village, where all was yet quiet and still. Only the blue smoke curling here and there from a chimney betokened that the cottagers were afoot and preparing for the work of the day. Now the road wound through fields where the harvest lay gathered in sheaves or still waved to the morning breeze like a golden sea. Now it passed through a hamlet or little thorp, where cottage homes, with their yellow beehives and latticed windows, peeping through climbing rose-bushes and trellised vines, smiled shyly at the traveller. Then again it led over breezy uplands whence the eye wandered with delight across a wide rolling country which, diversified with meadow, wood, and river, stretched away for miles to melt into tenderest blue on the horizon. Or again descending it would wind by the lonely

shore of some broad water, on whose farther side the hills, grey with rocks above, green with trees and grass below, fell in softly rounded slopes and sunny knolls to meet their fairy sisters of the water, those inverted images that, mirrored with a faint quivering motion, slept on the tranquil bosom of the lake.

Perseus had begun by inquiring of the people he met whether they could direct him to the object of his search. But the result of his inquiries was disappointing. The bumpkins whom he asked only scratched their heads or burst into a horse laugh. One superior person of bland exterior whom he ventured to address, listened with polite attention to all he had to say; but when Perseus had quite finished, he only said "Ah," smiled sweetly, and went on his way, to all appearance, rejoicing. An old dame who sat sunning herself at her cottage door, when she at last fully comprehended his meaning (he had to scream very loudly to make her hear, for she was nearly as deaf as her own door-post), clapped her hands to her ears (a precaution which in the circumstance seemed almost superfluous) and hobbled shrieking into the house. Baffled and discouraged, Perseus soon gave up inquiring and resolved to go on his way without asking help or direction from any one.

By this time the sun was low down on the western hills. Already the traveller had met teams of oxen plodding wearily homeward, dragging

behind them the upturned plough, and had received and answered the rough "Good-night" of the attendant swains. The tinkling of bells in distant sheepfolds, the hum of the bats and beetles as they wheeled droning past, or the solitary bark of a dog, were the only sounds that broke the stillness of the autumn evening. As the crimson glow slowly faded in the west, giving place first to a pale pure green, which in turn passed by an insensible transition into the steel blue of the nightly sky, one by one the stars shone out cold and calm, and one by one the lights in the cottage windows began to twinkle through the evening shadows, reminding the belated and weary wayfarer of the home from which every step was taking him farther and farther away. The familiar room rose up before him, now lit by the flickering glow of the cheerful firelight. His mother, he felt sure, was standing at the window looking down the road where he had passed out of her sight that morning, and where, at the last turning, he had stopped to look back and wave her once more good-bye. Only that morning! How long it seemed since then, and with how different feelings now, in the stillness and darkness of approaching night, he regarded the fatal enterprise on which he had embarked. Full of these melancholy thoughts, he paused and looked back. The moon was now rising. Against her bright disc, just appearing above the dark eastern ridge, the pines that fringed the summit of the hill stood out sharp and black,

striking a chilly horror through the blood of the traveller, to whose high-wrought imagination they assumed an ominous character, as of spirits of darkness and of death rising up to blot out with their foul and blasting presence the light of life, of goodness, and of home. Shaking off as best he could these gloomy forebodings, he resumed his way. The moon had now fully risen; and, flooded by her brilliance, every leaf and twig, every fern and stone stood out clear and distinct as by day, but blanched with the ghostly pallor of moonlight. The shadows cast on the road by rock or tree were startling in the intensity of their blackness; and stretched along its white expanse the moving shadow of the traveller seemed as if cut out of solid darkness with a knife.

Thus he trudged on, how long he knew not. The silence, the monotony of the motion, the dull oppression of his melancholy thoughts, all united to plunge him into an unconsciousness bordering on sleep, a state of somnolent oblivion, under the influence of which surrounding objects floated past as in a haze or a dream, undistinguished, unnoted, unremembered. From the depths of this lethargic trance he was suddenly roused by something, he could not at the moment tell what, but instinctively he felt that some momentous change had taken place and that a great, decisive crisis in his life was at hand. At the point where he thus suddenly awoke to consciousness, the road was ascending

through a pine forest. On either hand the silent, solemn pines rose up, their tops glistening in the moonlight, their lower branches buried in a blackness as of the grave. Beyond them and at no great distance towered on either side of the narrow defile a range of toppling crags, whose sides, here scarped with awful precipices, there carved and hacked into gullies and torrent-beds that seemed to eat into the very entrails of the mountain, presented a bewildering succession of glaring light and deepest shadow, while the jagged pinnacles that shot up from the summit of the ridge into the deep blue of the sky oppressed the mind with a feeling of height immeasurable, a sensation as of falling, falling for eternity through an infinite abysm of space.

The condition of semi-somnolence in which the traveller had been so long plunged had passed away like a flash and had been instantaneously succeeded by an extraordinary state of nervous tension, in which every sense seemed stretched to the utmost limit of its range, and the faculty of thought itself to be quickened and elevated to an utterly abnormal degree of vividness and power. At first he was entirely unable to point to anything which could explain the marvellous change of which he was conscious in every nerve of his body, and which seemed to thrill even the dead silence of the scene around him with a throbbing, pulsing life. But soon he became aware of a circumstance as unusual as it was startling. Right in front of and above

him, at the spot where the ascending road cleft the pine forest and touched the sky-line, there shone a strange light, a light too near and diffused to be that of a setting star, too radiant and intense to be the dawn, then just beginning to lighten faintly in the east. Eagerly, with beating heart, he pressed up the steep. As he drew near, the light grew brighter, till on reaching the summit what was his amazement to see that it surrounded as with a halo the figure of a tall and stately woman, who stood on a rock by the wayside. Instantly recognizing the divine features of the goddess Athena, he bent in lowly reverence. "Thou seekest the Gorgon's head?" she asked. He bowed assent. "Know then," she pursued, "that the evil-minded Polydectes seeketh thy life and the hand of thy mother. Therefore hath he sent thee on this errand that thou mayest perish and that he may take perforce thy mother to wife. One way alone is there by which thou mayest save her and thyself. Enter into the city which lieth before thee, and when thou art come to the tavern at the sign of the Owl, shew unto the host this ring," and she handed him a curiously carved signet-ring. "He will furnish thee with a ship wherein thou shalt sail many days till thou comest to the Land beyond the Sunset. There, by the shore of a great sea, shalt thou find the Gorgon's Cave. In front of the cave watch the Three Grey Women, who have but one eye between them, and they

pass it the one to the other. Wrest it from them and cast it into the sea. Then enter into the cave and cut off the head of the Gorgon Medusa; but in doing so, beware that thou lookest not on her countenance, for whosoever doth so, is straightway turned to stone. When thou art returned, shew the head to King Polydectes; he will be turned to stone, but thou and thy mother shall be saved. Mark the words I am about to speak and grave them on the tablets of thy memory. See that thou tarriest not till the year is out; for so soon as the sun shall have risen on another year, all virtue shall have gone out of the head, and thou and thy mother must infallibly perish. But now sleep and take thy rest. For verily thou hast much both to do and suffer." She ceased; and straightway such drowsiness fell upon Perseus that he could scarce keep up his heavy eyelids while he thanked and reverenced the goddess. Then he laid him down under the rock by the roadside and fell on sleep.

When he awoke, it was broad day. The scene was the same, yet different. He still lay where he had fallen asleep under the rock on the summit of the pass, but in front of him stretched a scene which the obscurity of the night and the absorbing interest of the vision had previously hidden from his view. Below him and far off lay the sea, its blue waters sparkling in the morning light. From the height on which he stood the road descended rapidly,

the pine forest being soon replaced by beech and chestnut woods, and these in turn disappearing to make room for lawns and meadows interspersed with groves, the trees of which were too remote to be distinguished by the eye, but which even at that distance struck him with an aspect somewhat strange and exotic. At the utmost verge of the land he descried the domes and minarets of a great city glittering in the sun and sending far out into the sapphire sea long lines of stupendous masonry whereat he saw or fancied that he saw the tall masts and fluttering pennons of countless galleys. "Yonder," thought he, "is the city whither I am bound." So thinking he took the road down the hill.

Walking quickly he had soon passed the pine forest, traversed the beech and chestnut woods, and emerged on the savannahs. Even as he descended the sun grew hotter and hotter. Instead of the keen air, impregnated with the brisk smell of the pines, which he had inhaled with delight and exhilaration on the mountain height, he now breathed an atmosphere laden with the heavy perfume of flowering plants and odorous gums. The hedges were thick with white roses and entwined with honeysuckle. The pale purple bloom of the almond, drooping over the road, alternated with the dark glossy foliage and golden balls of the orange-tree or the lighter yellow of the more delicate lemon. From sunny groves of

oleanders and myrtles the purl of unseen streamlets fell on the ear with a soothing murmur, a delicious suggestion of coolness in the noonday heat. For still as the road descended the heat grew more intense, the atmosphere sultrier and more oppressive. The road now wound under a continuous arch of the most luxuriant and varied foliage. Tall palms reared their graceful heads high in air; tree ferns with feathery crowns, cactuses twirled into endless grotesque shapes, the great sword-blades of aloes, and a thousand other strange plants with gigantic leaves and fantastic flowers, interlaced and festooned in every direction by the trailing shoots of brilliant creepers, formed a verdurous alley, across which darted unceasingly parrots and humming-birds of the most vivid plumage, crimson, blue, and green, while the hum and glitter of myriads of gay insects, glancing like sparks of fire in the subdued light that penetrated through the green canopy overhead, stunned the ear and dazzled the eye, and the sense reeled and fainted in the steaming sweetness of the incense-laden atmosphere.

The day was already on the decline when the traveller reached the city, but in the streets the bustle of traffic, which had somewhat lulled during the sultry hours of noon, was now at its height. Down long bazaars he passed, where in recesses open to the street and protected by many-coloured awnings from the glare of the sun, rich bales of costly silk, jewelled arms and precious trinkets

alternated in picturesque confusion with the most luscious fruits and the fairest flowers. Eager groups crowded round the stalls haggling over the wares, while others lounged leisurely along in the grateful shade of the awnings, watching with idle curiosity the buyers and sellers, or stopping to greet and chat with their acquaintances. The centre of the street was crowded with jostling vehicles, from the stately chariot where the dusky, white-turbaned slave stood holding the sun-shade over his fairer-skinned master, down to the creaking, cumbrous waggons drawn by the slow-paced, mild-eyed oxen.

Making the best of his way through the crowded streets, Perseus at last turned up a narrow lane out of one of the main thoroughfares and halted before a tavern. The tavern had little to distinguish it from many that he had already passed except a rude figure of an owl carved in stone over the low lintel. An awning, striped broadly with red and white, shaded the door and window, through which floated a sound of music, voices, and laughter. Perseus entered and found himself in a low room of moderate size crowded with people seated at long narrow tables, eating, drinking, and talking. In a corner a musician was twanging a lute and singing as he played, while two gaudily dressed women joined in with cracked voices. All eyes were turned on the new comer, and a slight lull ensued, of which the musicians, whose energies had been languishing under the cold shade of neglect,

hastily availed themselves to burst into a melodious bravura of uncommon strength. The curiosity of the frequenters of the tavern, however, which seemed to have been excited for a moment by Perseus' rustic dress, was soon satisfied; they returned to their cups and platters, the noise of voices in conversation rose higher than ever, and those of the sweet singers in the corner sank to a lugubrious depth proportionate to the height to which they had lately risen.

As Perseus was looking about him for the host, a grave elderly man approached him and bowed. "Mine host of the Owl?" asked Perseus. "The same," replied the man, "what can I do for you?" "I have private business of importance," said Perseus, "may I see you alone?" "Pray step this way," said the host courteously, and pushing aside a tapestry hanging that concealed a doorway on the back wall, he led the way across a cloistered court in which a fountain was plashing from the mouths of marble Tritons in a little grove of feathery palms and sweet-smelling flowers. Through a door in the cloister facing that by which they entered, the host ushered Perseus into a spacious apartment whose coolness struck him gratefully after the furnace-glow of the court through which they had just passed. So far as he could see in the dim light (for the room was darkened to exclude the heat), the furniture was both rich and tasteful. The footstep fell noiselessly on soft, deep

carpets. Tables of inlaid wood supported vases of graceful shapes and storied sides, filled with masses of great lilies and gorgeous trumpet-flowers. The walls were hung with many-hued tapestries, works of the gay Assyrian looms; and the coffered and fretted ceiling shone resplendent with blue and gold. In a recess burned a silver lamp on a small altar, and in the depth of the recess it seemed to Perseus that he caught a glimpse of a marble image.

"And now, sir," said the host, turning to him, "may I beg to know your business?" "This ring will help to explain it," said Perseus, drawing from his bosom the signet-ring which he had received from the goddess, and handing it to the host. The latter looked at it closely, bowed deeply, and restoring it to Perseus stepped to the altar, on which he appeared to place something. As the heavy smell of incense diffused itself through the apartment, he knelt down and remained for some moments in an attitude of prayer. Then he rose, and returning to the spot where the young man stood, requested to know his pleasure. "I seek," said Perseus firmly, "the Gorgon's head." The host started and his cheek blenched visibly. "Young man," he said solemnly, "do you know the perilous nature of the enterprise on which you are embarked?" "I know," said Perseus, "and am resolved. Expostulation is useless." The host placed his hand on the youth's shoulder and looked him steadily in the eyes for some seconds. Then removing his hand with half

a sigh he said in a changed voice, "You wish a ship, I suppose. When do you sail?" "To-day, if possible," returned Perseus. "Then I must make arrangements immediately. Meantime, will you refresh yourself after your journey?"

Perseus accepted the offer gladly, and the host, at his desire, led him back to the tavern, where an abundant repast of fish, cheese, bread, figs, dates, water-melons, and raisins was placed before him with a flagon of red wine. He sat in a corner of the room, shunning observation, and the other customers paid little heed to him. His thoughts were too busy with his approaching voyage to allow him to derive from the observation of the motley company by which he was surrounded the amusement and interest which at a less serious moment it might have afforded him. In about an hour's time the host returned, and, intimating that all was ready, begged Perseus to follow him.

Leaving the tavern they passed through many streets which Perseus had not yet seen. Traffic had by this time somewhat abated, but the crowds of loungers, attracted by the cooler evening air, had considerably increased. Jugglers in grotesque costumes, surrounded by curious and laughing groups, were busy plying their trade at the street corners and in the piazzas. Flower-girls offered to the passers-by a bewildering profusion of the loveliest and most fragrant flowers — orchids, camellias, roses, violets, lotus, orange-flower,

myrtle, wild thyme, jasmine, and countless more, freshly culled in the gardens that surrounded the city, or brought since morning from the distant hills. The wealth and magnificence of the city struck Perseus with amazement. They passed palace after palace, where, through stately portals, they caught glimpses of broad marble staircases and colonnaded courts, adorned with statues and fountains, and bright with the living verdure of myrtles, orange-trees, and palms.

At last, turning down a side street, they issued abruptly on the harbour. If the scenes through which they had passed had been gorgeous and imposing, that which now burst on the eyes of Perseus overpowered him with a fabulous and dream-like splendour. On either side of the harbour rose a high hill, on whose steep sides masses of rich green foliage appeared here and there among the grandiose structures which, terrace above terrace, colonnade above colonnade, towered far up into the sky, their dizzy pinnacles right against the blue being crowned by what seemed temples or palaces of white marble glistening resplendent in the sun. Farther off the descending spurs of the hills were adorned and crowded with buildings no less magnificent, while long lines of quays, thronged with the pomp of gay galleys with gilded prows and fluttering streamers, stretched seaward far as eye could reach. The whole scene was suffused, and, as it were, transfigured with an

unearthly light by the dying splendour of the sun, then sinking to his rest through a towering mass of clouds and vapour, which, reflecting and diffusing his beams, wrapped sky and sea, quay and shipping, temple and palace and tower in a haze of golden glory, and cast along the waters a burning path of rays that reached from the western horizon to the waves which, rippling onward in sparkling silver towards the spot where Perseus and his companion were standing, broke in snowy foam at their feet. Transfixed by the scene, Perseus stood silent in admiration. Then hearing his companion, who had advanced a little way, calling after him, he turned and hurried onward.

A short walk brought them to a ship which by the bustle on its deck showed plainly that it was preparing to put to sea. Porters were busy carrying stores on board, and bronzed sailors were swarming up the shrouds, hauling at ropes and hoisting sails with the quaint droning cries peculiar to their craft. The vessel was a broad, full-bellied galley, its high curved prow and stern shining with paint and gilding, its crimson pennons streaming to the wind. Mine host of the Owl made Perseus known to the captain, who was standing on the quay directing operations. These were soon completed. The host embraced Perseus not without emotion and bade him God-speed. Then Perseus stepped aboard the vessel: the ropes were cast off, the great peaked sails slowly filled and bellied, and the galley glided gently and

almost imperceptibly from the quay. The adventurer seated himself on the lofty stern, and watched with interest and admiration the long lines of quays and shipping past which they were now rapidly moving. His thoughts were still full of all the sights, to him both novel and strange, which he had so lately been witnessing, and long after the vessel had cleared the harbour-mouth and, urged by a freshening breeze, was breasting with foaming prow the rolling waves of the open sea, he continued to gaze back at the towers and temples of the great city now fast diminishing to windward.

But gradually the scenes through which he was passing diverted his thoughts both from the past and the future. The cool sea air, blowing freely round him, refreshed and invigorated him after the stifling heat of the city. Green islands floated past with little towns nestling on their sides, whose white houses flushed a rosy pink in the warm sunset light. Tall cypresses peeped over the walls, and rows of nets hung drying on the beach. Now and then a fishing-boat, with sail of russet-brown, would be seen standing into a blue creek, while on the strand the women and children waited to welcome the fisherman to his home.

Thus they sailed many days. They had long lost sight of land, and with every day the sun sank lower and lower in the sky, till at last it no longer appeared even at mid-day, and all that the forlorn mariners could see of it was a faint glow that circled

slowly with the heavy hours round and round the horizon. Even this grew fainter and fainter, till at last it seemed as if the last glimmer were about to disappear and leave them shrouded in perpetual night. Then the captain knew that they were drawing near to land. One afternoon (they estimated the lapse of time now by the hour-glass alone) Perseus, oppressed by the long-continued darkness and the weight of sombre forebodings, had lain down to sleep on the deck. But his sleep was troubled and he dreamed a dream. It seemed to him that he saw his mother fleeing, pursued by Polydectes with a flashing sword. On, on they sped through a waste, lone land. In vain he struggled to follow them: a weight like lead was on his limbs: at every step he fell farther and farther behind, and now the sword, heaved on high, gleams afar, a wild shriek rends the air, "Too late, too late!" and——

With a start he awoke to hear the cry, "Land ahead." Leaping to his feet, and peering through the gloom, he could see that they were running close to a high wooded coast. Great cliffs rose sheer above them, at whose base the sea broke with a gurgling, choking sound. Now and then they surged past a headland, over the black rocks of which the waves dashed in white foam that gleamed through the darkness. At last a word of command rang out from the captain, and the vessel swung round a wooded promontory into a sheltered cove.

As the sea-breeze, intercepted by the rocky height that closed the mouth of this natural harbour, died away, the tall sails flapped, then drooped, like the weary wings of some great sea-bird: the rush of water at the prow slowly subsided: the anchor was cast: its chain ran out with a prolonged rattle; and then, her long voyage over, the vessel rode at rest. "This is our destination," said the captain; "this is the Land beyond the Sunset."

Hastily slinging his wallet over his shoulder and girding on his sword, Perseus stepped into the boat to be rowed ashore. The undulations produced by the entry of the vessel into the cove had by this time subsided, and, except for those raised by the passage of the boat itself, not a ripple ruffled the dark surface of the water, not a sound broke the silence, save the measured clank of the oars in the rowlocks and the splash of their blades in the water. Soon the boat drew up beside a jutting ledge of rock at the head of the creek, and Perseus stepped ashore. To the captain, who had accompanied him in the boat, he bade a brief farewell, and then stood for a few moments watching the boat as it disappeared in the direction of the ship. It was arranged that the *Olive Branch* (for that was the name of the vessel) was to await him for the space of forty days. After that, if he had not returned, they were to give him up for lost and set sail for home.

From the head of the creek where Perseus stood a faint semblance of a path appeared to lead steeply

up the mountain-side through the forest. He at once struck into it, and soon with panting breast and aching limbs he was ascending the slope. At every step it seemed to grow steeper : the trees, unable to root themselves to its precipitous sides, became more and more rare : at the most a solitary pine or ash, clinging to the cliff with a despairing grip, afforded him occasionally a less precarious foothold, a point at which to take breath and measure, as best he could in the dim and uncertain light, his upward progress. Now, as he rose higher, he could see far away on the horizon the faint streak that spoke to him of that cheerful world of light and life which he had left behind, perhaps for ever. But the thought of his mother and her danger revived his drooping spirits and nerved his flagging limbs to fresh exertion. " Before the sun rises on another year—" the words seemed burned into his memory in letters of fire ; once more he faced the cliff and struggled upwards.

At last, when it seemed to him that his strength could carry him no farther, he perceived that he had reached the mouth of a defile which appeared to strike into the very heart of the mountains. Deeper and deeper it led into the gloomy recesses of the forest, higher and higher towered the trees. The silence was unbroken. No living creature, not a moth or a bat flitting past, appeared by sight or sound to relieve the silent horror of the scene. Foot of man had never trodden these awful solitudes since the world began. How long he strayed in

that gloomy wood, he never knew. It seemed to him days and days; but he had lost all reckoning of time, and in the darkness, the solitude, the silence, minutes passed like hours, hours like days, and days like years.

He had given up all hope of ever emerging from the wood, but, goaded by a gnawing impatience in his soul, still continued to press onward, when at last he became gradually aware that he had reached the outskirts of the forest, and that the scene was beginning to change. A stony plain had succeeded to the forest, and over this the forlorn traveller now dragged his slow and painful steps. Compared with this wilderness of rock and boulder, the forest appeared to his memory like paradise. At every few steps he stumbled and fell on the cruel stones, whose jagged edges cut him like knives; or again he would slip into a gaping hole between great boulders, from which he had to extricate himself with difficulty and pain. The desolation seemed multiplied a thousandfold. In the forest he had at least had the companionship of the trees, but here there was not a blade of grass, not a scrap of moss, to clothe the arid nakedness of the rocks. Fatigue overpowered him: again and again he lay down on the sharp stones to sleep but not to rest. Horrid dreams beset him: dreadful shapes seemed to throng the air, peering out of the darkness with fiery eyes, gibbering and mowing at him. He started up in terror and stumbled on.

Thus it seemed to him that ages rolled over him: he appeared to himself to be swallowed up and annihilated in the inconceivable vastness of time. The memory of his former life, of the time when he had seen the sun and conversed with human beings, occurred to him occasionally, but as something so immeasurably remote that he scarcely thought of it in connexion with himself; it more resembled a dream, a vision of some strange state of being which he had never known and in which he could never participate. The very stones over which he still dragged his bleeding feet began to fade and melt away into the same dim distance: he scarcely felt the pang: it, too, was a part of that far-off life in which he had no part: pain itself began to grow impersonal.

Such a state of feeling could have had but one end, had he not been roused from his stupor by a sudden shock, the perception of a change that was taking place in his circumstances, and which, while it awoke and stirred him to his inmost depths, froze his soul with horror. The light, the dim, faint glimmering light, which had hitherto cast a feeble and uncertain illumination over the ground in his immediate vicinity, was fast failing: its little circle was speedily contracting: darkness, absolute and complete, was closing in on him with rapid strides. Another instant and it was on him: the last spark and glimmer had disappeared: he was enveloped in darkness that could be felt.

Then Death stood before him, and its horror took hold of him; but with one supreme effort, one last despairing clutch at the life that was slipping from his grasp, he plunged forward into the night and lo! the long agony of these torturing stones was over, his foot rested on the smooth rock. A spark of hope, faint as the light which had just vanished around him, revived in his breast: he hurried on with feverish strength, scarcely heeding the darkness in the joy of at last moving freely onward. Onward—but to what? He was soon to know; for now a lurid light suddenly and silently lit up the scene and as suddenly and silently disappeared. Mercy of heaven! he was standing on the brink of an abyss; another step and he would have plunged into its yawning depths! The momentary gleam had sufficed to show that the plain had vanished: above him on every side black, frowning mountains shot up in sheer precipices to incalculable heights, while beneath him gaped depths, even a glance at which caused the brain to reel and the eyes to grow dim. He staggered back appalled. But even in his horror remembering that to stand still was death, and that safety (though the very thought of it seemed a mockery) could only be had in motion, he dragged himself on, stumbling and falling indeed, but only to stagger to his feet and hurry once more madly along. Again and yet again that weird and silent light flared up, and vanished after casting for a

moment a pale and ghastly radiance over the horrors that surrounded him. Now it revealed him to himself, tottering along what seemed the very roof and topmost pinnacle of the world; above and around him emptiness; but beneath him depth upon depth descending as if he were looking down upon the world through the void of space from some distant star. Again he found himself clinging to a hair-breadth ledge that hung upon the face of a sheer precipice between a measureless height above and a bottomless abyss below. Then the merciful darkness would close in and hide the scene.

It was after such a moment, while his head still swam, and his whole frame seemed dissolving in deadly sickness, that a sound, the first save those of his own footsteps that he had heard for long, struck on his ear. He halted and listened with strained attention. Again it came, the same low, muffled, far-off sound, and yet again, in measured cadence. And now a breath of air fanned his haggard face. The sea, the sea! Still clinging to the rock he began to advance rapidly but cautiously, foot behind foot. As he advanced, the sound, though still low and distant, grew nearer and more distinct: his last doubts vanished: it was indeed the sullen roar of breakers on an iron-bound coast. The air began to come in puffs, which grew more frequent till they formed a steady breeze blowing over him. Its freshness revived him as by magic. Strength returned to his tottering limbs:

he felt the blood beginning to course through his veins, and to mantle once more his sunken cheeks. With this gradual resurrection of the body, came a corresponding revival both of memory and hope. The past began to disentangle itself from the dreary mists of oblivion, and the future to break through the clouds of despair, like a ray of sunshine bursting through a stormy sky.

His position was still appalling in the extreme. For again the same wan mysterious glow had shone out silently and vanished, and by its pale glamour he had seen that he was still creeping along that dizzy ledge. The rock, over which his hands groped in vain for some slight protuberance, some trifling inequality of which to lay hold, still rose smooth and perpendicular above him; still, on the other side, yawned an empty gulf into which a single slip of the foot would hurl him headlong to destruction. Far below he had caught one flying glimpse of a wild waste of waters, whose hoarse boom came floating faintly up from the prodigious depth below. He was still edging his way along in the darkness and clinging to the rock as best he could, when in the act of putting his foot forward as usual and feeling for the ledge, while he kept the other foot firmly planted, he was horrified to find that his foot could find no resting-place, only the empty air—the ledge had come to an end. And when he groped forward with his hand, he could feel the rock no longer, rock and ledge had stopped

together. What was he to do? To turn on that knife-edge was impossible: to make his way backward over it was equally out of the question. All he could do was to wait for another flash of that mysterious light: it would reveal to him his fate. So he stood, hugging the smooth wall of rock and waiting. In the cramped position in which he stood his limbs ached, numbness crept over them, he could not keep his hold much longer. At last the silent gleam flashed out again, and by its light he became aware of a rocky platform that seemed scooped out of the face of the precipice. It lay right in front of him but separated from him, alas! by a black yawning chasm. It was his only chance, another moment and he would have to let go his hold: he leaped with all his force, fell short, but in falling caught the edge of the rock, and with a great effort clambered up and fell swooning on the platform.

Scarcely had he come to himself and struggled to his feet, when the light gleamed out again, and by its transitory flash he perceived at the farther end of the rocky platform on which he stood three dark gigantic figures looming through the murky air. Their backs were half turned to him, and they sat looking seaward, vast, silent, motionless, sphinx-like. Instantaneously it flashed on him with a thrill of awe and rapture—these were the Gorgon Sentinels, the Grey Women! His heart beat with such violence that he could scarcely

breathe, but bracing himself for the great hazard he crept softly in the direction in which he had caught sight of the mysterious forms. As he did so, a blinding flash lit up the gloom : the three huge figures suddenly loomed close in front of him : the flash passed distinctly from one to another of them, and was instantly followed by the same weird, universal glow which he had so often beheld with wonder and fear. Now he saw it all—it was the EYE that had passed from the one to the other and had caused that wondrous light—the Sentinels were relieving guard ! Crouching down for a spring he waited, and when next the gleam came he made one mighty bound, seized in both hands the huge crystalline sphere, and, blinded though he was by its flashing radiance, sprang to the edge of the cliff and hurled it over. Down, down it dropped through the darkness like a falling star. For one moment it shed a pale glow over that starless heaven : for one moment it lit up far and wide the heaving waters of that wild homeless sea : then night spread her sable pall once more over the scene.

And now from these grim, sphinx-like figures a sullen muttering sound began to issue, like the growling of a lion before he leaps or the roll of distant thunder. Without waiting an instant, Perseus turned to search for the mouth of the cave, and immediately his eye was arrested by a solitary speck of light which he judged must be in the rock

behind the Sentinels. He felt his way towards it but, though he advanced steadily, it seemed to grow no larger or nearer. On he went for a long time. The hollow moan of the sea and the hoarse thunder of the baffled sentinels had died away behind him, and still the light remained a mere speck, no larger, no brighter, no nearer. Gradually, however, it began to grow in size and brightness, and soon he perceived that he was traversing a vast cavern, the overhanging sides and lofty roof of which were almost lost in the gloom.

The light at the farther end of the cave had brightened into a ruddy glow which, as he drew nearer, he perceived to be flickering. As he advanced, his ears began to be assailed by a deafening noise, the like of which he had never heard before; and at the same time a stifling heat began to pervade the atmosphere, which increased with every step he took onwards, till what with the heat, the glare, and the noise, he felt as if he must faint or turn back. But all of a sudden the cavern came to an end, and he stood in presence of a sight compared to which all that he had yet beheld sank into insignificance. A seething lake of liquid fire lay before him, its molten billows aglow with the most fervent heat and lashed into a thousand tortured shapes, like lost souls writhing under the tormentor's scourge. All around shot up terrific mountains, but above them all one heaven-soaring cone, that with a continuous and ear-cracking roar was spewing its

fiery entrails in a prodigious column of flame into the face of the red, affronted sky.

And yonder at the foot of a beetling crag right under the cone Perseus espied three dreadful forms stretched prone on the burning marl. The long-expected moment had come at last, yonder were the Gorgons. Nerving himself for the final trial, he drew his sword and sped up the crimson slope. The glowing lava scorched his naked feet: its fierce lustre blinded him: the stunning roar of the volcano battered his ears like the blows of a giant's hammer: its burning hail pelted him like drops of molten lead; but up he sped. And now he was under the crag; now his hand was twining in the Gorgon's snaky locks; he felt the clammy serpents coiling about his arm, he heard their horrid hiss. But his sword was up, and the next moment he held, with averted eyes, the Gorgon's head in his hand. But hark, O hark! A sound as of the crack of doom is heard, such sound as clashing suns and bursting stars shall make in the final catastrophe of the universe. He looks up, and right overhead, down from that awful cone that rises sheer above him, he sees a fiery surge, an avalanche of flame rushing with the speed of a torrent to overwhelm him. Terror-stricken, but still grasping the fatal head by its snaky hair, he turned and fled.

* * * * *

In his palace King Polydectes held high festival.

It was his bridal night and in the great banquet-hall he had gathered the nobles of his kingdom to celebrate his union with the fair Danaë. The hall was worthy of the great occasion. Its enormous dimensions, baffling the eye in the vain attempt to fathom them, rivalled the most stupendous structures of Egypt or Assyria, or whatever remains to attest to a feeble and degenerate age the Titanic glories of the antique world. Long rows of massive Egyptian pillars supported vast granite arcades that rose one above the other till they were crowned by the sky, the only roof that befitted so gigantic a structure. Colossal statues in endless vista held in their uplifted arms flaring torches of pinewood: on huge tripods of bronze were set blazing cressets that tossed aloft their fiery arms; while in the upper arcades appeared mazy festoons of starry lamps that twinkled through the gloom.

The night was late: the queen had long retired; but the revelry was at its height and the king still sat on his lofty throne in the centre of the vast hall. In that gay scene he alone seemed unhappy: a heavy cloud darkened his brow.

"Why is the king so sorrowful on his wedding night?" asked of him a white-headed minister who stood near the throne.

"Nestor," replied the king, "the crisis of my fate is at hand. I feel it."

"What means my lord the king?"

"You remember the Chaldean sage?"

"The hoary vagabond whose eyes your Majesty caused to be put out last autumn? I remember him, the charlatan. He deserved his fate."

"When we stretched him on the rack," continued the king, "he cried out that I should never live to see the sun rise on another year. And to-night is the last night of the year."

"Then why need your Majesty be afraid?" asked the minister. "In another hour the sun will be up, and your Majesty's vain fears will be dispelled."

"It may be so," said the king gloomily, "but my heart is very heavy. Death is in the air."

While he spoke, the lower part of the hall was still steeped in the red tumultuous glare of the blazing flambeaus and cressets; but over the arches and columns of the upper galleries a pale, cold light began to steal. It was the dawn.

"Audience of the king!" a voice rang through the hall, a clarion voice that smote on the king's ear like a knell. He started to his feet, trembling in every limb, and clutched for support at the golden eagles that flanked the throne. In vain he tried to scream for his guards: no sound issued from his dry, parched throat. The crowd of revellers and attendants parted and down the living lane came striding Perseus. He stopped before the throne and bowed low to the king, who stood aghast and motionless.

"Your Majesty," he said, "commanded me to

bring the head of the Gorgon Medusa. I obey. Behold."

Drawing from his wallet the fatal head he held it up before the king, averting his eyes as he did so. Instantaneously a death-like stillness fell on the hall. The eager hum of curiosity, the joyous sounds of revelry, the voluptuous swell of music, died away together. In all that vast assembly not a hush was heard, not a finger stirred. In one corner of the hall the king's jester had opened his mouth to utter a merry quip, but his lips remained parted and the jest unspoken. A little circle of listeners had crowded round him, smiling by anticipation; and still as he continued silent, they retained their listening attitude with the smile unchanged on their faces. In another corner a lover had bent over his mistress to snatch a kiss, and she had stooped blushing to avoid it. And still she stooped with the roses on her cheeks, and still he hung over her with puckered lips and the lovelight in his eyes. The wine-cup flashed in many an uplifted hand, but still the hand remained uplifted and the wine untasted. Slowly the morning light crept down and down, falling strangely on the peopled but silent banquet-hall, and putting to shame with its pale pure radiance the smoky flicker of the sputtering and expiring torches. Then suddenly a bright beam shot through the great eastern oriel and streaming down the long hall struck on the king where he still stood rooted to

the throne. It played softly over his grey hair, turning by its heavenly alchemy the silver streaks to gold; and it lit up—O ghastly spectacle—the livid agony of his drawn and distorted features. The sun had risen, but he knew it not. For he and all his lords and ladies were turned to stone.

III

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

I

WILLIAM COWPER

William Cowper, one of the best of men and one of the most charming of English poets and letter-writers, was born on the fifteenth of November (old style) 1731, in the rectory of Great Berkhampstead in Hertfordshire. He came of a good stock on both sides. His father, the Rev. John Cowper, D.D., rector of the parish, was a son of Spencer Cowper, one of the judges of the Common Pleas, and brother of the first Earl Cowper, an eminent lawyer and statesman, who was twice Lord Chancellor in the reigns of Anne and George the First. The poet's mother was Anne Donne, daughter of Roger Donne, of Ludham Hall in Norfolk; through her the poet numbered among his ancestors John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's, whose memory, even if the frigid conceits and harsh numbers of his verses were forgotten, would live in the limpid prose of Izaak Walton, the sweetest of English biographers. Through his mother, too, Cowper traced his lineage by four

different lines from Henry the Third, King of England. In one of his letters he tells us that at the desire of his kinsman, the Rev. John Johnson (a Donne on the mother's side), he had sent up the long muster-roll of his ancestors, signed and dated, to Mr. Blue-mantle, adding, "Rest undisturbed, say I, their lordly, ducal, and royal dust! Had they left me something handsome, I should have respected them more." And again in the lines on the receipt of his mother's picture he touches lightly on the same string:

> My boast is not, that I declare my birth
> From loins enthroned and rulers of the earth:
> But higher far my proud pretensions rise—
> The son of parents passed into the skies!

He lost his mother when he was six years old. She died in 1737, at the age of thirty-four, in giving birth to his brother John; but she made so deep an impression on Cowper's affectionate heart that it never wore out, and when fifty-two years afterwards he received her portrait "with a trepidation of nerves and spirits," he could answer for the fidelity of the likeness. He kissed it and hung it by his bed where he could see it the last thing at night and the first thing at wakening in the morning. The sight of it revived his memories of her and of his childhood, and he composed, "not without tears," the verses which enshrine her memory and his own in a casket more precious

and more lasting than any of gold and jewels. It recalled the sad day when from his nursery window he watched the hearse bearing her slowly away, and heard the bell tolling to her funeral; while the maids, in pity for his passionate grief, soothed him with promises, which he long cherished, that she would return. The picture, too, brought back happier recollections of his mother's love and care, her nightly visits to his chamber to see that he was safe and warm, the scarlet mantle in which he was wrapped, and the velvet cap he wore, when the gardener Robin drew him, day by day, in his "bauble coach" along the public way to school, and the hours he passed seated at his mother's side playing with the flowers of her dress, the violet, the pink, and the jessamine, while she stroked his head, spoke softly to him, and smiled. Cowper's father survived the death of his wife for nearly twenty years; he died in 1756. His son, then resident in London, was sent for to attend him in his last illness, but arrived too late to see him in life. Then for the first time it struck Cowper, whose constant and affectionate nature formed strong local attachments, that the tie with the place of his birth must be broken for ever. There was not a tree, nor a gate, nor a stile in all that country, he tells us, to which he did not feel a relation, and the house itself he preferred to a palace. He sighed a long adieu to fields and woods, from which he once thought that he should never

be parted, and was never so sensible of their beauties as at the moment when he left them to return no more.

After his mother's death Cowper was placed in a school kept by a Dr. Pitman, in Markyate Street, a dull straggling village of Hertfordshire, between St. Albans and Dunstable. There for two years he suffered much from the cruelty of a barbarous young bully, more than twice his age, who singled out the tenderly nurtured little boy to be the butt of systematic but secret persecution. Being at last detected, the ruffian was expelled the school. The treatment to which he was subjected at this school made naturally a deep and lasting impression on Cowper's mind, and no doubt helped to form and colour those strong views of the pernicious influence of English public schools, to which he gave powerful expression in his poem *Tirocinium*.

When Cowper was removed from Dr. Pitman's, he was in some danger of losing his sight, for specks had appeared in his eyes, perhaps as a consequence of the persecution he had suffered, and it was feared that they might extend and cover the retina. He was therefore placed in the house of an oculist, where he remained two years. The trouble gradually subsided, though to the end of his life his eyes were liable to inflammation. In the last sad days, when, far from the green lanes and shady avenues of his beloved Weston, he paced the Norfolk beach, looking out on the grey North Sea, the salt spray

so irritated his eyelids that, after vainly battling with it under an umbrella, he had to abandon his favourite walk by the ocean and content himself with roaming bypaths and under hedges, in duller scenes but softer air.

From the house of the oculist Cowper was removed at the age of ten to Westminster School. There he seems on the whole to have been happy, for in his correspondence he refers to his school-life not infrequently, and always apparently with pleasure. He records, for example, a happy dream he had had of being back at Westminster, in high favour with his master, and rewarded with a silver groat for a composition which was passed round from form to form for the admiration of his school-fellows. Again, he tells us that he loved the memory of Vincent Bourne, "poor Vinny," as he calls him, the poetical schoolmaster, the neatest of all men in his versification and the most slovenly in his person. He remembered seeing the Duke of Richmond set fire to the greasy locks of the absent-minded pedagogue, and then box his ears to put it out again. He thought Bourne a better Latin poet than Tibullus and Propertius, and amused himself by turning some of his verses into English. Of a robust constitution and a good walker to the end of his days, Cowper as a youth excelled in cricket and football. Among his schoolfellows at Westminster were the poets Charles Churchill and Robert Lloyd, the stage-manager and author, George Colman, Warren

Hastings, and his enemy Impey. For Hastings the poet had a high esteem, and the favourable opinion of so good a man and so shrewd a judge of character should plead strongly in favour of the accused statesman at the bar of history. On the great day when Westminster Hall, its grey old walls draped with scarlet, was crammed with the rank and fashion, the beauty, the eloquence, the genius and learning of England, gathered to witness the trial of one who had spread the fear of the English name and the sway of the English race among the dusky races of the East, Cowper thought of his old school-fellow, the little pale-faced man with the pensive brow and the resolute lines about the mouth, facing that august assembly; and he urged his cousin Lady Hesketh, even at the risk of being squeezed and incommoded for some hours, not to miss the chance of witnessing so memorable and impressive a spectacle. She took his advice, and retired from the hall stunned by the thunder of Burke's invective. The long charges and Hastings's replies to them were read by Henry Cowper, Clerk of the House of Lords, and the report of the silence and attention with which his silvery voice was listened to by the audience for two whole days gave pleasure to his cousin the poet, who refers to the achievement in his correspondence and commemorated it in a sonnet.[1]

[1] Beginning—

Cowper, whose silver voice, tasked sometimes hard.

At the age of eighteen Cowper left Westminster School, and having fixed on the law as his profession, he was articled for three years to a solicitor, Mr. Chapman of Ely Place, Holborn, and resided with him during that time. One of his fellow-clerks in the office was Edward Thurlow, afterwards Lord Chancellor, who had been educated at Canterbury School. Much of the time which the two young men should have devoted to the study of law in Holborn was more agreeably spent by them not far off in Southampton Row, at the house of Cowper's uncle, Ashley Cowper, afterwards Clerk of the Parliaments, a dapper little man in a white hat with a yellow lining, which made him liable to be mistaken for a mushroom. But it was not for the pleasure of his society that the two clerks repaired with praiseworthy regularity to his abode from the dusty purlieus of the law. He had two charming daughters, Harriet and Theodora, with whom the future poet and future Lord Chancellor passed their days from morning to night "giggling and making giggle." The natural consequences followed. Cowper lost his heart to his cousin Theodora, who returned his love. Thurlow, having no heart to lose, was unmoved by the charms of the lively, handsome, and good-natured Harriet, who afterwards married Sir Thomas Hesketh, and remained the poet's kind, wise, and steady friend to the end of his life. One day, while the two young men were drinking tea with a lady friend

and her sister in King Street, Bloomsbury, Cowper said to Thurlow, "Thurlow, I am nobody, and shall always be nobody, and you will be Lord Chancellor. You shall provide for me when you are!" Thurlow smiled and said, "I surely will!" "These ladies are witnesses," said Cowper. "Let them be," answered Thurlow, "for I certainly will." The prophecy was fulfilled, but the promise was broken. A false lover (for in after life he became a father though never a husband) and a faithless friend, Thurlow appears to have been as unamiable in private life as he was rash, domineering, and headstrong in public affairs. The letters which after a silence of many years he condescended to write to his now famous friend, whom he had neglected and ignored in his poverty and obscurity, are far from confirming the testimony which Dr. Johnson bore to the intellectual capacity of this odious bully.

When he left the solicitor's office in 1752, Cowper, now in his twenty-first year, took chambers in the Middle Temple. It was there that the shadow of religious melancholy, which was afterwards to deepen into hopeless gloom, first fell across his life. He tried to dispel it by poring over the grave, sweet poetry of Herbert; but a more effectual, if temporary, relief was afforded by a visit which he paid to Southampton with Mr. Hesketh, the betrothed lover of his cousin Harriet. There, to please Mr. Hesketh, who loved yachting,

Cowper wore trousers, gave himself nautical airs, and sailed the sea; but he found the confinement of a sailing-boat, even on a short voyage, exceedingly irksome, and seems to have heartily shared the opinion of Dr. Johnson, that being in a ship is like being in prison with the chance of being drowned. When the moralist of Bolt Court enriched the world with this profound maxim, he had never been to sea in his life; but very soon afterwards he had an opportunity of tasting the delights of "a life on the ocean wave." Crossing over from Skye to Coll in a small sailing vessel, he lay below "in a state of annihilation"; yet though the wind howled, the rain beat, the sea ran high, the night was very dark, the sailors themselves were alarmed, and all on board were in real danger, Dr. Johnson behaved under these trying circumstances with the perfect composure and courage which he always displayed in the greater emergencies of life. Cowper could boast of no such heroic experience on Southampton Water, yet he deeply sympathized with Noah and Jonah, when they were enlarged from the confinement of the ark and the whale's belly respectively; and in stepping out of the good sloop *Harriet* he felt that he bore a considerable resemblance to these celebrated characters. But whenever he could be spared from the horrors of the great deep, he was happier walking with his cousin Harriet in the fields to Freemantle or Netley Abbey, scrambling with her over hedges,

or seated on a height in clear still weather, looking across the sunlit sea to the New Forest.

From Southampton, after a stay of some months, he returned to his chambers in the Temple, and was called to the bar on the fourteenth of June 1754. But he had taken no pains to qualify himself for his profession; and it is more than doubtful whether he ever had a client. He tells us, indeed, that one day, reading by the fireside in his chambers, he was startled by a prodigious lumbering at the door, and on opening it beheld a most rural figure in muddy boots and greatcoat, whom for a few delirious moments he took for a client drawn from afar by the renown of his legal acumen and learning to sit at the feet of the new Gamaliel. Visions of silk, if not of the woolsack, perhaps floated before the mind of the briefless barrister, but they were rudely dispelled when the stranger drew from his bulging pockets a pair of fat capons and presented them to him, explaining that he was the farmer with whom the poet's brother lodged at Orpington in Kent. The crestfallen barrister, assisted by a few choice spirits, disposed of the capons at supper, but all prospects of legal advancement had vanished for ever.

A deeper disappointment befel him when his uncle, Ashley Cowper, refused his consent to the poet's engagement with his cousin Theodora. The reason which the father alleged for his refusal was that the tie of blood between cousins is too close

to admit of marriage; but perhaps he saw the young man's incapacity for business, or discerned ominous symptoms of the mental derangement which was to follow. Be that as it may, the cousins parted and never met again. That Cowper felt the separation deeply at the time seems certain; yet in later life he appears to have forgotten his early love entirely, even while he kept up a close friendship and correspondence with her sister Harriet, Lady Hesketh. Theodora was more constant, she loved him to the end of her life, treasured the poems he had written for her, helped him without his knowledge or suspicion in his poverty, and died long after him unmarried.

During his life in the Temple, Cowper belonged to the Nonsense Club, a society of seven Westminster men, who dined together every Thursday, and amused themselves by composing ludicrous verses. Among the members of the club were Bonnell Thornton, George Colman, Robert Lloyd, and Joseph Hill. The last of these was a true friend to Cowper through good and ill; the poet afterwards corresponded with him and bore honourable testimony to his sterling worth in the rhyming *Epistle to Joseph Hill, Esq.* A man of simple tastes and regular habits, Hill drudged successfully at the law, but could relax himself from his professional cares in the country, reading on sunshiny banks, or lying on his back and watching the clouds go by. Cowper has painted another picture of Hill

sitting in his box at the coffee-house on a winter evening, while the waiter with high-raised hand poured from the teapot a long and limpid cascade into the foaming, frothing cup below.

Three years after his father's death, which occurred in 1756, Cowper removed from the Middle to the Inner Temple, where he purchased chambers for two hundred and fifty pounds in an airy situation. About the same time he was made a Commissioner of Bankrupts, but he seems to have cultivated the Muses much more diligently than the law. He produced several halfpenny ballads, two or three of which had the honour to become popular; and with his brother John, then studying for the Church at Cambridge, he kept up a rhyming correspondence: the whole of it he preserved for a time, but it perished in the wreck of a thousand other things when he left the Temple. He also helped his brother with a translation of Voltaire's *Henriade*, contributing a version of four books. With a friend named Alston he about this time read Homer through, comparing Pope's translation with the original all the way, and coming to the conclusion that there was hardly anything in the world of which Pope was so destitute as a taste for Homer. Cowper also contributed a few papers to *The Connoisseur*, a magazine of essays in the style of *The Spectator* and *The Rambler*, which was started by his two school-friends, Bonnell Thornton and George Colman, in January 1754

and ran till September 1756. The same friends were two of the original proprietors of *The St. James's Chronicle*, a newspaper characterized by a vein of playful satire, to which Cowper also made a few contributions.

When he had reached his thirty-second year, his little patrimony was well-nigh spent, and there was no appearance that he would ever be able to repair the loss by the practice of his profession. About this time the Clerkship of the Journals of the House of Lords fell vacant and was offered to Cowper by his kinsman, Major Cowper, who had it in his gift. As the business of the office was transacted in private, the poet thought that the post would exactly suit his shy and retiring temperament. But hardly had he acquiesced in the prospect when he began to be assailed by serious doubts and misgivings; and his uneasiness was greatly increased by some opposition that was made to his proposed appointment, as well as by the intelligence that he would have to be publicly examined at the bar of the House of Lords in order to give proof of his qualification for the office. This last news fell on him like a thunderbolt. Peace forsook him by day and by night: a nervous fever attacked him; and though he endeavoured to qualify himself for his duties by reading the Journals of the House of Lords daily for about six months, his distress continued, and every time he set foot in the office he felt like a condemned criminal arriving at the place of execu-

tion. This could not last, and when the vacation was pretty far advanced, he went in the month of August 1763 to Margate to rest his aching brain and restore his shattered nerves by fresh air and sea breezes.[1] The visit, like the one on a similar occasion to Southampton, had a beneficial effect. Little as he enjoyed sailing on the sea, he loved the prospect of the ocean, and the solemn monotonous roar of the waves, he tells us, affected him as sweet music affects others, composing his thoughts into a melancholy not unpleasing. But the lullaby of the billows has its dangers. One day walking on the strand, where the cliff is high and perpendicular, Cowper failed for a time to notice that the tide was rising, and when he did observe it, it was almost too late. By running at full speed he was just able to reach one of the cartways cut through the rock, which led him to the top of the cliff and to safety. While the sea pleased him at Margate, the society did not. Every week the sailing hoy (for it was long before the days of steamers) went to London loaded with mackerel and herrings, and returned loaded with company which was more lively than select By the same hoy Charles Lamb afterwards made the same voyage in the company of the gentleman who professed to have sailed under the legs of the Colossus of Rhodes; and for all its delays and

[1] In the previous year (September 1762) Cowper had paid a visit to Brighton and found it "a scene of idleness and luxury, music, dancing, cards, walking, riding, bathing, eating, drinking, coffee, tea, scandal, dressing, yawning, sleeping."

discomforts the essayist preferred the old sailing vessel, with its weather-beaten, sun-burnt captain, to the trimness and foppery of the modern steam-packet which he lived to see.

From Margate the poet returned to London refreshed, but only to plunge into deeper shades of misery. The terror of the dreaded ordeal increased: he grew sullen and reserved: he fled from society and shut himself up in his chambers: when his cousin, Lady Hesketh, came to see him, he would not speak to her or look at her. To such a pitch did his insane fears carry him, that on the morning of the day when he was to appear at the bar of the House of Lords, he made a determined and nearly successful attempt on his life. When Major Cowper called at his rooms to conduct him to the House, he found his unhappy relative in a condition which once for all put an end to the prospect of his holding the parliamentary office. But the removal of this anxiety did not bring peace to his troubled mind: the disease was too deep-seated, and soon developed into a black religious melancholy, or rather mania, which obliged his family to put him under restraint. In December 1763 he was removed to a private asylum kept by Dr. Nathaniel Cotton, a skilful doctor and a good man, at St. Albans. Under the care of this kind and judicious physician Cowper recovered his senses in a few months, but it was a year and a half before he ventured to leave the asylum and face the outer

world once more. In the interval his religious despair had been changed by a strong revulsion of feeling into religious rapture: from believing himself eternally damned he now came to believe himself eternally saved, and was transported with joy and gratitude: he grudged even the hours of slumber because they interrupted the flow of his happy meditation on the blissful work of the Redeemer. At first the sudden transition excited the fears of Dr. Cotton; but, himself a devout Christian, he was led by the assurances of his patient to acquiesce in the soundness of his cure, and henceforth, so long as Cowper remained in his house, the two had much happy discourse together on the subjects of their common faith.

When he was sufficiently recovered to leave the asylum, Cowper resolved to avoid London and seek a quiet home for himself elsewhere. He was very poor; for his patrimony was spent, or nearly so, and he now resigned his Commissionership of Bankrupts which had brought him in £60 a year. But his family subscribed to make him an annual allowance; among those who contributed was his kind and generous kinsman, Major Cowper. The poet's wish was to settle near his brother John, who, after holding a curacy at Orpington in Kent, was now a Fellow of St. Benet's (Corpus Christi) College, Cambridge; but somewhat strangely his brother could find no suitable lodgings for him nearer than Huntingdon. Cowper left St. Albans

on the seventeenth of June 1765, very early in the morning, and reached Cambridge the same day. After a stay of four days there he removed to Huntingdon, where his brother saw him installed in his lodgings and left him.

His mind had now recovered its natural tone of cheerful serenity, and the letters which he wrote from Huntingdon to his friends breathe a spirit of tranquil happiness and contentedness with his surroundings. It was then the height of summer, and he enjoyed bathing in the Ouse, whose broad stream and flowery banks he praises in a letter written on Midsummer Day shortly after his arrival. He thought the town one of the neatest in England and the country round it fine. "I am persuaded in short," he writes to Lady Hesketh, "that if I had the choice of all England, where to fix my abode, I could not have chosen better for myself, and most likely I should not have chosen so well." To a passing traveller, it must be acknowledged, the attractions of the scenery about Huntingdon hardly lie on the surface. He sees in it little but flat green meadows and sluggish streams, their banks fringed by willows, with here and there a grey church tower standing out among trees, or the sails of a windmill breaking the low monotonous line of the horizon. But Cowper was happy. After the storm he had found a calm; and among these green pastures and beside these still waters he doubtless often meditated, with a full heart, on the Good Shepherd,

who, as he fondly believed, had led his strayed sheep into a quiet fold.

The distance from Cambridge made Cowper a horseman, for he met his brother John alternately at Cambridge and Huntingdon; and though he sometimes got a lift in a neighbour's chaise he generally rode over, a distance of some fifteen miles across a flat country, to the University town. Amongst the friends to whom he wrote from Huntingdon were the ever-faithful Joseph Hill, who had kindly taken charge of Cowper's affairs during his illness, Lady Hesketh, and Major and Mrs. Cowper. Of these Mrs. Cowper was his first cousin. Her brother was Martin Madan, at that time chaplain to the Lock Hospital, a clergyman of the Church of England whose style of preaching approached to that of the Methodists, then rising into importance. He had visited Cowper during his mental affliction in the Temple, and had attempted to soothe his cousin's distress by religious consolation. Afterwards he incurred Cowper's deep disgust by publishing a treatise called *Thelyphthora* in defence of polygamy. To that work the poet makes many references in his letters. It drew down on its author a storm of opprobrium, which drove him from his chaplaincy into retirement.

The longer Cowper stayed at Huntingdon the more he liked the place and the people. "In about two months after my arrival," he says, "I became known to all the visitable people here, and do

veritably think it the most agreeable neighbourhood I ever saw." Amongst the acquaintances whom he made at Huntingdon was the family of the Unwins, destined to influence the whole subsequent course of his life. It consisted of a father and mother, a son and a daughter. The father, the Rev. Morley Unwin, a man now advanced in years, had been master of the free school and lecturer to the two churches at Huntingdon before he obtained a college living at Grimstone in Norfolk. His wife, whose memory is imperishably linked with that of Cowper, was Mary Cawthorne, the daughter of a draper at Ely. She was much younger than her husband. Her understanding was good, her temperament calm and cheerful, her piety deep and fervent, her countenance grave, but sweet and serene. She was well read in the English poets and had excellent literary taste: she loved rural walks; and her manners, according to Cowper, a very good judge, were more polite than those of a duchess. Not liking the society and the sequestered situation of Grimstone, she persuaded her husband to return to Huntingdon, where he was known and respected. Accordingly he took a large convenient house in the High Street of the town,[1] and received into it a few pupils, whom he prepared for the University.

[1] The house, a plain edifice built of bricks, which once were red but have turned a dusky colour, has now been divided into two. The parlour, in which Cowper is believed to have sat with the family, is a handsome apartment on the ground-floor with three deep windows looking out on the street. The church of St. Mary, where he is said to have worshipped, is only a few steps off across the street.

His only children were a son and daughter. The son, William Cawthorne Unwin, an amiable young man of about twenty-one, had lately returned home after graduating at Cambridge. The daughter, Susanna, was a girl of about eighteen, "rather handsome and genteel," as Cowper describes her; she appears to have resembled her mother in character as well as in piety. Altogether Cowper found the Unwins "the cheerfulest and most engaging family-piece it is possible to conceive."

The friendship which he struck up with them, based on congenial tastes and similar dispositions, was so close that when a vacancy occurred in Mr. Unwin's house through the departure of a pupil, Cowper applied to succeed him, and on the eleventh of November 1765 he became an inmate of the house. In his letters he describes the calm, happy, regular life which he led as one of the family—the morning prayers and service in church, the early dinner, the religious talk in the garden, the walk after tea, the evening reading and conversation till supper, the hymns sung to Mrs. Unwin's accompaniment on the harpsichord, and, last of all, the evening prayers. In this peaceful round his life glided quietly away for more than eighteen months. Even wintry weather, which dispelled some of the summer charms of Huntingdon, could not spoil his domestic happiness. "I am glad," he writes to Lady Hesketh in January 1767, "you spent your summer in a place so agreeable to you.

As to me, my lot is cast in a country where we have neither woods nor commons, nor pleasant prospects: all flat and insipid; in the summer adorned only with blue willows, and in the winter covered with a flood. Such it is at present: our bridges shaken almost to pieces; our poor willows torn away by the roots, and our haycocks almost afloat. Yet even here we are happy; at least I am so; and if I have no groves with benches conveniently disposed, nor commons overgrown with thyme to regale me, neither do I want them. You thought to make my mouth water at the charms of Taplow, but you see you are disappointed." In a memoir of his life and sufferings, which Cowper drew up at Huntingdon for the benefit of his new friends, and which was published after his death, he concludes his sad story by expressing his contentment with his "place of rest," and his hope that nothing but death might interrupt the even tenor of the life he enjoyed there.

But a tragic interruption was at hand. In July 1767 Mr. Morley Unwin, riding on a Sunday morning to his church at Graveley, was thrown from his horse and died, after lingering in pain for several days in the cottage to which he had been carried. This broke the tie which bound Mrs. Unwin to Huntingdon, she decided to leave the place, and Cowper resolved to go with her. The son, William Cawthorne Unwin, had meantime taken orders and been ordained to a curacy. A

visit which they received at Huntingdon from the Rev. John Newton a few days after Mr. Morley Unwin's death determined Mrs. Unwin and Cowper to remove to Olney, where Mr. Newton was curate. He undertook to find a house for them, and they accepted his offer. Accordingly, he engaged Orchard Side, a tall, plain, red-brick house standing in the market-place of Olney, and so near the vicarage that by opening doorways in the garden walls the occupants of the two houses could communicate without going into the street. Newton lived in the vicarage, for Moses Browne, the vicar, burdened with a large family, was an absentee through debt. Thither accordingly Mrs. Unwin and Cowper removed, and were settled in their new home before the end of the year.

The town of Olney is the most northerly in Buckinghamshire. It stands on the northern side of the Ouse, and consisted in Cowper's time of little more than a single long street, broadening about the middle into a triangular market-place adorned with three fine elms. Most of the houses were built of yellow stone with thatched roofs. The outstanding features of the place were the handsome old church with its tall spire rising on the outskirts of the town, and the long bridge with arches of various shapes and sizes bestriding the river in front.[1] At Olney the Ouse is a sluggish

[1] The old bridge, having fallen into disrepair, was pulled down in 1832 and replaced by a much shorter one.

stream winding in serpentine curves between banks fringed by bulrushes. On either side the meadows are flat and green, and beyond them the ground rises into heights which here advance towards the river in flat promontories, and there recede from it in shallow bays. Standing on the bridge and looking westward up the stream, you see on higher ground, at a distance of less than two miles, tall forest trees rising up against the sky-line, and seeming to overhang a square church tower. They mark the site of Weston Underwood. The road to it, so often trodden by the feet of William Cowper and Mary Unwin, runs parallel to the river, hardly more than half a field's breadth up the slope; from the point where the road rises with the swell of the ground, there is a pleasant prospect over the broad green valley of the Ouse, a prospect loved by the poet and celebrated by him in the first book of *The Task*.[1]

In itself the town of Olney was mean, if not squalid, and a great proportion of the inhabitants miserably poor. Lace-making, an unwholesome sedentary occupation, was the principal industry, and with straw-plaiting it employed so many women and children that the farmers of the neighbourhood

[1] Olney and its neighbourhood are described with loving fidelity by Hugh Miller, in his *First Impressions of England and its People*, chap. xv. He made a pilgrimage to Olney and Weston in the autumn of 1845, and was so fortunate as to be guided over the poet's haunts by a hale old woman who well remembered Cowper and Mrs. Unwin.

found it difficult to obtain hands for their work. In his house on the market-place, adjoining the lane called Silver End, the least reputable quarter of the town, the poet had to put up with the incessant screaming of children and barking of dogs; and on the fifth of November, when the urchins were particularly obstreperous, and engaged in a sport which they called hockey, but which consisted essentially in bespattering each other and the windows of the houses with mud, the poet was forced from time to time to arise in his wrath and threaten them with a horse-whip. Putrid exhalations, fishy fumes of marsh miasma, and miry roads in winter are among the unattractive features of Olney which Cowper has left on record. When William Unwin first visited his mother at Olney and contemplated the front of the house, he was shocked; in his eyes it had the appearance of a prison.

Mrs. Unwin and Cowper had been drawn from Huntingdon to Olney by the attractions of the Rev. John Newton, whose clerical ministrations they expected to enjoy. They certainly received them in full measure, but whether they enjoyed them or benefited by them is at least open to question. Newton, a man of robust constitution and iron nerve, had begun life as a captain of a Liverpool slaver, a profession which he afterwards exchanged for that of a clergyman of the Church of England. That his piety was deep and sincere,

and that he had a disinterested affection for Cowper, cannot be doubted; but it seems equally certain that he was very indiscreet, and that the religious stimulants with which he plied Cowper's sensitive and highly-strung nature had a most pernicious influence, and were indeed a main cause of the terrible relapse into insanity which the poet suffered a few years after settling at Olney. Nor was Cowper the only victim of the Rev. John Newton's injudicious zeal. The reverend gentleman has left it on record that his name was "up about the country for preaching people mad"; he knew near a dozen of his flock, most of them pious or, as he phrases it, gracious people, who were disordered in their minds, and he wondered whether the cause was the sedentary lives the women led over their lace-pillows, or the crowded little rooms in which they lived. The principal cause, if we may judge by Cowper's case, was Newton himself. He had engaged an uninhabited house called "the Great House" in Olney, and here he held prayer-meetings characterized by religious heat and excitement. At these the shy poet, who had already sacrificed his career in life and been driven into an asylum at the mere prospect of speaking in public, had often to lead the devotions of the godly, engaging aloud in extemporary prayer, the cynosure of all eyes and ears in the assembly. That he did so with impressive effect we are told and can well believe; but we know from his own testimony that such public

exhibitions cost him hours of great agitation before he took part in them, and we can easily imagine the rapid pulse, the flushed cheek, and the throbbing head with which he issued from the meetings, after exposing his heart's deepest emotions to the scrutiny of the censorious, too often, it may be feared, to the mere idle curiosity of the vulgar. Even his walks on summer evenings were sacrificed to these religious exercises; and instead of enjoying the fresh air and sunshine in the open fields he was shut up in the house listening to long-winded prayers and sermons till supper-time.

The baneful effect of all this on Cowper soon manifested itself. After the settlement at Olney his letters to his friends first became rare and then ceased altogether. The correspondence with Lady Hesketh came to an end, and was not resumed for many years; that with Joseph Hill grew perfunctory and was chiefly confined to matters of business, which that unwearied friend continued to transact for the recluse. The distance from Cambridge also cut him off from easy intercourse with his brother; instead of meeting once a week they met now only once a year. In July 1769 he lost the companionship of his friend William Unwin, who left Olney to reside at Stock, near Ramsden, in Essex, of which he had been appointed rector. Another blow fell on the poet in March 1770 when his brother died of asthma at Cambridge. Cowper was with him in his last days, and wrote

an account of his illness and death, which is included in his works. Thus more and more isolated and left to the tender mercies of the Rev. John Newton, Cowper gradually sank into a profound melancholy, which the composition of the *Olney Hymns*, undertaken at Newton's suggestion by the two friends jointly in 1771, was hardly of a sufficiently recreative and exhilarating character to dispel.

By January 1773 the melancholy had deepened into madness. One night towards the end of the month the symptoms were so alarming that Mr. and Mrs. Newton were roused from bed at four o'clock in the morning to attend him, which they did promptly. The most threatening appearance soon wore off, but the malady continued for months. On the approach of the annual fair at Olney, which was held in April, Cowper entreated to be allowed to pass the night at the vicarage in order to be out of hearing of the noise. The request was granted; he went for a night and stayed for more than a year, his terrors making it impossible to remove him except by force, which Newton was too affectionate a friend to employ. We should have had more sympathy with Newton in this embarrassing situation, if he had not drawn the trouble on himself by his injudicious conduct. However, in the trying circumstances, he seems to have behaved well, submitting with patience to the humours and fancies of the poor sufferer, and refusing to accept any pecuniary remuneration for the extraordinary

expenses to which he was put by the presence of two uninvited guests. For Mrs. Unwin accompanied Cowper to the vicarage, and was unwearied in her attendance on him by day and night, "equally regardless of her own health and of the uncharitable construction of censorious and malignant tongues." For the state of mind of the invalid required a constant watch to be kept on him: it grew rather worse than better, and in October he attempted his life under the insane idea that God required him to offer himself up as a sacrifice after the approved style of Abraham and Isaac, with the important difference that the sacrificer was to operate on himself instead of merely on a beloved son. The murderous attempt, like its prototype, fortunately miscarried. Gradually the cloud began to lift: though he spoke little, and never except when spoken to, he pruned the trees in the garden: at last he began to make remarks on them, and one happy day, in feeding the chickens, he was seen to smile. Soon after he was persuaded to return home, and from that time the amendment seems to have proceeded steadily.

Shortly before his return, in May 1774, Mrs. Unwin's daughter Susanna was married to the Rev. Matthew Powley, vicar of Dewsbury, and removed with her husband to Yorkshire, so that Cowper and Mrs. Unwin were now left alone at Orchard Side. The poet took to gardening and carpentering; and a friend presented him with three hares, which

afforded him a fund of innocent amusement. Their memory, even their individual characters, he has immortalized in Latin and English, in verse and prose. In 1776, after a silence of about four years, he resumed his correspondence with his friends. But the stream of his letters did not flow freely till after Newton's departure from Olney, which happily for the poet took place in September 1779. The good shepherd was very far from being satisfied with his flock; indeed their prospects for eternity, if we may take his word for it, were exceedingly gloomy. He spoke of them privately in most uncomplimentary language. He called them sons of Belial, lions and firebrands, men whose teeth were spears and arrows, and their tongues a sharp sword, bad enough when they were sober, but very terrible when they were drunk. He compared himself and the few righteous in Olney to pious Lot residing in the midst of Sodom, and the comparison, though unquestionably graceful and possibly just, was not of a sort, if it got wind, to ingratiate him with his parishioners. Indeed the relations between him and them seem to have been severely strained, and they came to a breaking point when he ventured to denounce from the pulpit the popular celebration of Guy Fawkes's Day, and in particular to discourage the lighting of bonfires and the illumination of houses with candles on that festive evening. This was too much. So long as he confined himself strictly to hellfire and brimstone,

he might be tolerated, but when he touched the sacred ark of bonfires and tallow candles on the Fifth of November, the populace rose like one man. There was a general explosion. On Guy Fawkes's night people put candles in their windows who had never done so before; and those who had done so before, now put twice as many. Night was turned into day by the blaze of the illumination. A mob paraded the street, smashing windows and extorting money from one end of the town to the other. The vicarage was threatened. The curate committed the case to the Lord, but the Lord paid no attention. Providence did not interpose. The crowd drew near. Mrs. Newton was terrified. A flag of truce was sent out, a parley was held. Soft words had some effect, a shilling had much more the mob dispersed, and they slept in peace at the vicarage.

So in time Mr. Newton, in the character of righteous Lot, turned his back on Olney and retired to London, where he had been presented by his friend Mr. Thornton to the rectory of St. Mary Woolnoth. But the parallel was not completed by the destruction of the wicked town. Olney survived his departure: the effervescence stirred up by his fiery ministry subsided, and the percentage of lunacy in the parish visibly declined. Peace of mind once more reigned at Orchard Side, and Cowper entered on what was perhaps the happiest period of his life. Not that he was then

or ever afterwards perfectly happy : the shadow of religious melancholy was never wholly absent from his mind : it always crossed and chequered the natural sunshine of his disposition and the outwardly calm flow of his peaceful days ; but by constant occupation of mind and body he was able to some extent to keep it under control. Of this chequered existence his letters henceforth present a full, almost a daily record, down to the time when he left his home in Weston to drag out the miserable remainder of his days in Norfolk. The principal events of these quiet years were the writing and the publication of his books, the revival of old friendships, and the acquisition of new. Of these outstanding incidents in the poet's otherwise uneventful career a brief notice may not be out of place.

In the curacy of Olney Mr. Newton was succeeded by the Rev. Thomas Scott, author of an elephantine commentary on the Bible in one hundred and seventy-four parts, which achieved the distinction of breaking the unfortunate publisher and reducing the commentator himself to indigence. However, he was amply rewarded for his labours by the honour of very nearly saving John Henry Newman's immortal soul,[1] and by the diploma of D.D. forwarded to him from the " Dickensonian College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania," by persons whose

[1] " The writer who made a deeper impression on my mind than any other, and to whom (humanly speaking) I almost owe my soul—Thomas Scott of Aston Sandford " (J. H. Newman, *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (London, 1888), p. 5).

names appear not to be blazoned on the bead-roll of fame. His style of preaching was acrid: he had a low opinion of his parishioners, and was at no pains to conceal his opinion: he detected several "professors" who had more leaves than fruit; and as he preached only twice a day on Sundays, he failed to satisfy the immoderate appetite for sermons which the population of Olney had contracted under his predecessor, so that there was a melancholy falling away to Dissent.

If Mr. Newton did much to unhinge his friend's mind, he at least made an attempt, after his departure from Olney, to repair the mischief. With this humane intention he invited Cowper to consider the parallel case of the Rev. Simon Browne, a respectable dissenting clergyman, who having suffered a domestic bereavement or knocked a highwayman on the head (for accounts differ as to the source of his mental affliction) sank into a deep dejection, ending in a settled persuasion that "he had fallen under the sensible displeasure of God, who had caused his rational soul gradually to perish, and left him only an animal life, in common with brutes; so that, though he retained the faculty of speaking in a manner that appeared rational to others, he had all the while no more notion of what he said than a parrot—being utterly divested of consciousness." In this melancholy situation Browne proposed to apply for the restitution of his lost soul, singularly enough, to Queen

Caroline; but the application being nipped in the bud by his friends, he devoted his shattered energies to the composition of a dictionary, a work for which, as he observed with some appearance of justice, the possession of a rational soul is wholly unnecessary. Later in life, sinking still lower in the scale of being, he turned his attention to polemical divinity, a subject to which his caustic remarks on dictionaries might perhaps be applied with equal force and even greater justice. But the spectacle of a once rational mind reduced to such deplorable extremities brought no comfort to poor Cowper. He admitted, perhaps he even smiled at, the delusion of the lexicographer and divine, but he refused to apply the lesson to his own case.

Mr. Newton rendered Cowper a much better service when, on leaving Olney, he introduced him to the Rev. William Bull, an Independent minister residing at Newport Pagnell, five miles distant from Olney. A man of sober mind yet fine imagination, amiable disposition, literary tastes, and cultivated understanding, Mr. Bull was an entertaining companion in society, though at other times his vivacity was dashed with a vein of tender and delicate melancholy. Motives of compassion at first led him to visit Cowper once a fortnight, but the two soon became good friends; the poet occasionally returned his visits, and corresponded with him. Cowper now betook himself to gardening. In the plain little garden at the back of the house he built

a couple of frames for growing pines, and glazed them himself with glass procured from Bedford. He also amused himself with carpentry, manufacturing tables in profusion, and joint-stools such as never were before or since. He also made squirrel-houses, hutches for rabbits, and bird-cages, as well as any squire in the country; and in the article of cabbage-nets he had no superior. He even took to drawing, and cultivated that fine art for a whole year, producing as the fruit of much labour a series of figures which had, he assures us, the merit of being unparalleled by any productions either of art or nature. In Mrs. Unwin's eyes they were beautiful, and she had three of his landscapes framed and glazed. After recounting his artistic exploits in one of his letters, he bursts out, "O! I could spend whole days and moonlight nights in feeding upon a lovely prospect! My eyes drink the rivers as they flow."

Happily for the world he sought for recreation and found his true vocation in literature. Mrs. Unwin urged him to write a long poem, and suggested as a subject "The Progress of Error." He assented, and engaged in the labour of poetry with such ardour that between December 1780 and March 1781 he had completed four long poems, *The Progress of Error*, *Truth*, *Table Talk*, and *Expostulation*. The task of finding a publisher was undertaken by Mr. Newton, who induced Mr. Joseph Johnson, of St. Paul's Churchyard, to accept

the book. Johnson had already published several volumes for Newton, who esteemed him, though not a professing Christian, a man of honour and integrity; indeed he admitted with regret that "professors," by which in the cant of his sect he meant persons who make open profession of religion, "in general find they may more safely depend upon the people of the world, than upon one another." A sad testimony for a "professor" to bear to "professors"! Henceforth all Cowper's works were published by Johnson, and though the poet often repined at the slowness of the printing-press he seems to have had no other ground for complaint against his publisher; indeed after many years of business relations with him the poet expressed his belief, and apparently his astonishment, that "though a bookseller, he has in him the soul of a gentleman." To the credit of his discernment, Johnson manifested more than common interest in Cowper's poems; he read them critically in the proof-sheets and marked several defective passages, which the candid author corrected with grateful acknowledgments to his censor and publisher. The book went slowly through the press: the printing dragged out through the whole of the summer and autumn of 1781, and the volume was not published till March 1782. But the delay was attended by a great advantage: the author was not only able to polish the original poems in accordance with his opinion that to touch and retouch

is the secret of almost all good writing; with the encouragement of his publisher he added several fresh poems, including *Conversation* and *Retirement*. At Cowper's request Newton wrote a preface for the volume, but its serious tone frightened the publisher, who thought that, while it might attract the pious, it would disgust the profane; and as he apparently rested his hopes of the sale of the work rather on the profane than on the pious part of the public, he earnestly recommended that the obnoxious preface should be withdrawn. Cowper regretfully and Newton honourably acquiesced. It was not till the volume had run through four editions and could stand on its own merits that Johnson ventured to prefix to it Newton's well-meant tribute to his friend's poetry.

The summer of 1781, when Cowper was busy with his poetical labours and the correction of the press, was very hot: the fields languished and the upland grass was burnt. In order to procure some coolness and shade in the garden, where the heat reflected from the walls and the gravel seemed like that of Africa, Cowper converted a small greenhouse into a summer parlour. The walls were hung with mats, the floor covered with a carpet, and the sun for the most part excluded by an awning; and in this pleasant nook, with myrtles looking in at the window, and a prospect of rows of pinks and beans, of carnations and roses blooming in the sunshine outside, the poet and his friends passed the heat of

the day in happy converse or contented silence, while the rustling of the wind in the trees, the singing of birds, and the hum of bees in a bed of mignonette made music in their ears.

For by this time the domestic circle at Orchard Side was enlarged by an important addition. One day, looking out of the parlour window on the market-place, Cowper saw two ladies calling at a shop opposite. One of them he knew; she was Mrs. Jones, wife of a clergyman who resided at the village of Clifton within a mile of Olney. But who was the other? Cowper's curiosity was aroused: he made inquiries, and it turned out that she was Lady Austen, sister of Mrs. Jones and widow of Sir Robert Austen, a baronet. Struck by her appearance, the poet persuaded Mrs. Unwin to ask the two ladies to tea, though when they came, his shyness getting the better of him, he could hardly be prevailed on to face the stranger. However, having forced himself to engage in conversation with Lady Austen, a lively agreeable woman of the world, he was so stirred and attracted by her that he escorted the two ladies back to Clifton, and cultivated his new acquaintance with such assiduity that he soon came to call her by the familiar title of "Sister Ann." On her side, Lady Austen found the society at Orchard Side no less to her mind; and the two families were quickly on the most intimate terms. One fine July day they picnicked together in the Spinney, a delightful bower in Weston Park. The

eatables and drinkables were conveyed to the spot in a wheelbarrow : the servants boiled the kettle under a great elm : the wheelbarrow served as a tea-table ; and after a walk in the neighbouring Wilderness the friends returned home, having spent the day together from noon till evening without one cross occurrence, or the least weariness of each other.

So pleased indeed was Lady Austen with Olney and its society, that she thought of settling in it as soon as she could dispose of her house in London. Cowper welcomed the prospect for Mrs. Unwin's sake as well as his own ; for since the departure of the Newtons she had had no female friends in the place, nor even a woman with whom she could converse in any emergency. With her high spirits, lively fancy, and ready flow of conversation Lady Austen promised to introduce a sprightliness into the calm home, which, if it was peaceful before, might be none the worse for being a little enlivened. For a time the promise was fulfilled, the fair prospect was unclouded ; and when Lady Austen returned to London in October the two friends at Orchard Side missed her. Cowper and she corresponded ; but when she expressed too romantic an idea of the merits of her new friends, and too high-flown expectations of happiness from her intercourse with them, Cowper was constrained to check these effusions in a letter which gave deep offence, and for a while all correspondence between them ceased.

However, in time the lady relented and sent a

peace-offering of ruffles, which was accepted. The breach was healed, and in the following summer (1782) Lady Austen returned to the house of her sister, situated on the brow of a hill, the foot of which is washed by the river Ouse as it flows between Clifton and Olney. But in the absence of Mr. Jones, the house was besieged by burglars every night, and the ladies, worn out with watching and repeated alarms, were at last prevailed on to take refuge with Mrs. Unwin at Olney. When Mr. Jones returned and men with firearms had put the ruffians to flight, Mrs. Jones went back to the house, but Lady Austen remained in Olney, and lodgings were taken for her at the vicarage. Only an orchard divided the garden of the vicarage from the garden of Cowper's house; and to facilitate communication doors were opened in the two garden walls, so that the inmates of the houses could meet when they pleased without going through the dirty streets of the town. They now saw each other daily and for many hours a day. They met every morning, dined with each other alternately except on Sundays, and did not separate till ten or eleven at night. In the morning Cowper walked with the ladies, in the afternoon he wound thread for them, in the evening he played at battledore and shuttlecock with one of them, while the other played on the harpsichord, and a little dog, lying under the performer's chair, howled an accompaniment.

On the whole, this social intercourse, while it

imposed a heavy tax on Cowper's time, was highly beneficial to his health and spirits. The gay, vivacious Lady Austen dispelled for a time the clouds of melancholy which too often hung over him: she was the Muse who inspired the most sportive and some of the most serious of his poems. He composed songs for her to sing to the harpsichord; amongst others the *Dirge for the Royal George* was written to suit one of her favourite airs. Another day, seeing him sunk in dejection, she told him the story of John Gilpin. Next morning he said that he had lain awake most of the night laughing at the story, and that he had turned it into a ballad. The ballad was eagerly copied, and finding its way into the newspapers was publicly recited by the comedian Henderson with great success. It became very popular before Cowper publicly acknowledged it by printing it along with *The Task* in the second volume of his poetry. The theme of *The Task* itself, the greatest of his poems, and one of the most delightful works in the English language, was suggested by Lady Austen. She had often urged him to try his hand at blank verse, and he promised to comply if she would find him a subject. "Oh," she answered, "you can never be in want of a subject; you can write upon any; write upon this sofa!" The poet took the hint and set to work on *The Task* early in the summer of 1783. Writing sometimes an hour a day, sometimes half an hour, and sometimes two hours, often in great depression of spirits,

he completed the poem in the autumn of the following year, but it was not published till June 1785. In the interval the friendship with Lady Austen was severed for ever, and in the summer of 1784 she had left Olney not to return. The cause of the breach has not been fully ascertained, but on the whole it seems probable that she was in love with Cowper and wished to marry him; that Mrs. Unwin was jealous, and that Cowper, too deeply attached to his Mary to dream of wounding her loving and faithful heart, renounced for her sake all relations with his brilliant and fascinating friend. He bade her farewell in a letter which, in a burst of mortification and pique, she destroyed.[1]

But if Cowper lost a friend in Lady Austen, he about the same time gained new friends in the Throckmortons of the Hall at Weston Underwood. Their house, which has long since been razed to the ground, stood in an old-fashioned park, which skirts the high road from Olney at the point where it enters the village. The head of the Throckmorton family was then Sir Robert Throckmorton, a very old gentleman, who resided at his seat of Bucklands in Berkshire. On the death of an elder brother in 1782 Mr. (afterwards Sir) John Throckmorton came into possession of Weston Park. With his predecessor at the Park Cowper had had no relations,

[1] Lady Austen, who had resided much in France, afterwards married an accomplished Frenchman, M. de Tardiff, and died at Paris, in 1802, two years after Cowper.

though he had been favoured with a key to the pleasure-grounds, and thus had been able to enjoy those rural walks and scenes which he has immortalized in the first book of *The Task*,—the umbrageous avenue of chestnuts—the rustic bridge where the willows dipped their pendent boughs in the stream—the proud alcove crowning the summit, with its far prospect over the nearer woodlands to the winding Ouse—the lime-tree walk with its high verdurous arch like a cathedral aisle, and the ground dappled with dancing lights and shadows as the wind stirred the light leaves overhead—the Wilderness with its well-rolled paths of easy sweep—and last the elm-grove, from between whose stately trunks on autumn days the thresher might be discerned sweating at his task, while the chaff flew wide and the straw sent up a mist of motes that sparkled in the noonday sunshine.

When Mr. John Throckmorton came to reside in Weston, Cowper sent him a complimentary card, and requested a continuance of the privilege which he had enjoyed by the favour of Mr. Throckmorton's mother, who had gone to end her days at Bath. The request was readily granted, but for about two years there was no intercourse between the families at Olney and Weston. The Throckmortons were Catholics, and having on that account received many gross affronts after they settled at Weston, they were naturally shy of making new acquaintances. However, in May 1784, when

balloons had just come into fashion, Mr. Throckmorton determined to send up one from his park, and among the neighbours whom he invited to witness the ascent were Cowper and Mrs. Unwin. They went and were received by the Throckmortons with particular civility. A warm regard on both sides was the result of the happy meeting. Cowper found Mr. Throckmorton most agreeable and engaging, and in Mrs. Throckmorton, "young, genteel, and handsome," he saw a "consummate assemblage of all that is called good-nature, complaisance, and innocent cheerfulness." They on their side appear to have been no less pleased with their visitors. A few days later, when Cowper and Mrs. Unwin were sheltering from a shower under a large elm in a grove fronting Weston Hall, Mrs. Throckmorton ran out to them in the rain, and insisted on their coming into the house till the weather cleared. Again, a few days passed, and Cowper and Mrs. Unwin on a walk through the park had almost reached the gate, when the iron gate of the courtyard rang, and they saw Mr. Throckmorton hastily advancing to them. He came to offer them the key of the garden, the only part of his grounds where he and his wife enjoyed perfect privacy. It was not long afterwards before the friends stood on a footing of cordial intimacy. Cowper was given full access to the library, a valuable privilege to one so fond of books, and so poorly provided with them; for though he had owned a

good collection of books when he resided in the Temple, he lost it on his removal to St. Albans, and his efforts afterwards to recover it were fruitless.

The publication of *The Task* and *John Gilpin* in the summer of 1785 made Cowper famous. Even his neighbours at Olney—and neighbours are generally the last to recognize that there can be anything out of the common in a man whom they see walking about every day—admitted that their fellow-townsman was a genius. The curate, Mr. Scott, expressed his admiration, and the schoolmaster, Samuel Teedon, carefully pointed out to the author all the beauties in his own poems, lest the poet himself should have overlooked them. But better than the fame, deserved as it was, and lasting as it has proved, which the volume brought him, was the renewal of his friendship with his beloved cousin, Lady Hesketh. After a mutual silence of many years she wrote to him in the autumn of 1785, and the letter came like sunshine into the quiet parlour at Orchard Side.

It would be doing great injustice to Lady Hesketh to suppose that it was the establishment of Cowper's reputation which induced her, as it seems to have induced other friends of former days, Thurlow and Colman, to renew acquaintance with him. She had ceased to correspond with him when he sank into a religious melancholy which she deplored, and which, with characteristic good sense, she attributed in large measure to its real cause, the

eternal praying and preaching of Mr. Newton. She renewed the correspondence with her cousin, whom she always loved and befriended, when his published writings gave evidence that he had recovered a healthier tone of mind, and when accordingly she need not fear being drawn by him into a bootless religious controversy. She seems to have been an admirable woman, of a good understanding, a cheerful equable temper, and a warm heart. From her portrait, painted by Cotes in 1755, we may judge that she was handsome : those who remembered her in her prime spoke of her as a brilliant beauty who drew all eyes on her at Ranelagh.

It was a happy day for Cowper when, coming down to breakfast on an October morning in 1785, he saw on the table a letter franked by his uncle, Ashley Cowper, and on opening it found a letter from Lady Hesketh. It was the beginning of a fresh correspondence in which he poured out to her all the wealth of his brotherly affection, all the playful humour and gaiety of his naturally serene and cheerful disposition. In one of his early letters to her at this period, in answer perhaps to some inquiries of hers, he describes himself as a very smart youth of his years (which were fifty-four in number), rather bald than grey, with enough hair of his own to curl at his ears, and to hang down a little below the bag-wig which he wore, with a black riband about his neck. From his account of himself in *The Task*, published that summer, we

know that advancing years had not yet pilfered from him

> The elastic spring of an unwearied foot
> That mounts the stile with ease, or leaps the fence,
> That play of lungs inhaling and again
> Respiring freely the fresh air, that makes
> Swift pace or steep ascent no toil to me.

Nor had they impaired his relish of fair prospects: the scenes that soothed and charmed him in his youth still soothed and charmed him growing old, when he gazed on them with his arm fast locked in hers, the dear companion of his walks through twenty winters.

With the renewal of her correspondence Lady Hesketh, now a widow by the death of Sir Thomas Hesketh a few years before, opened the springs of her bounty, and Cowper's letters to her are full of thanks for the substantial marks of her kindness and affection which frequently arrived at Orchard Side. With them, too, came from time to time presents from a nameless benefactor, whom Cowper calls Anonymous, and who appears to have been, though he never guessed the secret, his forgotten, but never forgetful love, Theodora Cowper. From writing to his cousin it was natural that Cowper should entertain the wish to see her again. The wish was mutual and was shared by Mrs. Unwin. Accordingly during the winter it was arranged between them that Lady Hesketh should come to them at Olney in the following June. As Orchard Side

was not commodious enough to lodge her and her servants in comfort, apartments were engaged for her at a house opposite.

Thenceforth Cowper's letters to his cousin contain many references to the pleasure which he anticipated from her visit in the coming summer. Seated by the fireside one wintry afternoon he saw her chamber windows across the way coated with snow, and he thought how the roses would begin to blow and the heat perhaps to be troublesome before Lady Hesketh would be with them. And as the time drew nearer his impatience to see her increased. In his letters he speaks of the walks they would take together, especially to Weston, their pleasantest retreat of all, though the road thither was shadeless all the way. But he went no more, he said, to the field by the Ouse where the poplars used to make a cool colonnade, their tops rustling in the breeze and their images reflected in the placid stream; for the trees were felled, and though the prospect from the field was still beautiful, it had ceased to attract him. And writing one May morning, while the grass under the windows was bespangled with dew-drops and the birds were singing among the blossoms of the apple-trees, he tells how the day before they had taken their customary walk in the Wilderness at Weston, had seen with regret the laburnums, syringas, and guelder-roses, some in bloom, some about to blow, and had remembered that all these would be gone by the time Lady Hesketh was come. And

though he consoled himself with the thought that there would be roses, and jasmine, and honeysuckle, and shady walks, and cool alcoves, yet he grudged that the advance of the season should steal away a single pleasure before she could come to enjoy it.

Lodgings were finally engaged for her, not at the house opposite Orchard Side, but at the vicarage, the same lodgings which Lady Austen had occupied before. The vicarage was then in a dreary comfortless condition, almost bare of furniture, for the vicar, Moses Browne, an old man of eighty-six, lived in it alone, without even a servant, and waited on only by a woman who made his bed, dressed his dinner, and left him to his lucubrations. Furniture had to be put in and other preparations made for the comfort of Lady Hesketh and the three servants she was to bring with her. These arrangements were actively carried out by Mrs. Unwin, and Cowper in his letters to his cousin describes the house, and the smart furniture with which, under Mrs. Unwin's superintendence, it was being garnished. The vicarage was a new house, neatly built of stone with sash windows: the square garden was enclosed with walls, but was shadeless except for the shadow of the house: the windows of Lady Hesketh's chamber commanded a view over the meadows and the river, with the long bridge occupying a conspicuous place in the foreground, and the road winding away in the distance. Her bed was draped with a superb coverlet of printed cotton

adorned with classical subjects: every morning she would open her eyes on Phaethon kneeling to Apollo, and imploring him to grant him the conduct of the chariot of the sun for a day.

So at last, after some delays and disappointments, Lady Hesketh arrived, and in her cheerful company Cowper and Mrs. Unwin were happier than they had ever been before at Olney. Nor were they the only people in the town to whom the presence of the kind-hearted lady brought smiles and sunshine. Every time she went out she took with her coppers in a velvet bag with which she made the children happy. Many years afterwards, when Cowper and his friends had long been dead and gone, an old woman of Olney remembered this Lady Bountiful, and the poet himself in his white cap and suit of green turned up with buff,[1] and the little dog Beau trotting beside them—a smart petted creature with silken ears, who one summer day made himself famous for ever by plunging into the Ouse and bringing back in his mouth a water-lily which his master had vainly tried to reach with his stick.

The arrival of Lady Hesketh at Olney soon led to an important change in the life of her two friends. She was dissatisfied, not without cause,

[1] Hugh Miller, *First Impressions of England and its People* (Edinburgh, 1889), chapter xv. pp. 253 *sq.* The old woman said "green turned up with black," but I have ventured to correct her memory by Cowper's own statement: "Green and buff are colours in which I am oftener seen than in any others, and are become almost as natural to me as to a parrot."

both with Olney and with their house. Cowper and Mrs. Unwin were fond of rural walks, and largely depended on them for the maintenance of their health and spirits; but at Olney they had suffered much in health from confinement, for in winter the roads in the neighbourhood were muddy and in summer they were hot and shadeless, so that by the time the two friends reached their favourite haunt, the woods of Weston, they were tired, and it was time to return. A gravel walk in their garden, about thirty yards long, was the only promenade on which they could count in all weathers, and, as Cowper observed, it afforded but indifferent scope to the locomotive faculty; the battlements of the Tower, he says, had he been confined a prisoner to that fortress, would have furnished him with a larger space for exercise. Fortunately at this time a good house, belonging to Mr. Throckmorton and close to his pleasure-grounds, was vacant at Weston: within a few days of Lady Hesketh's arrival it was settled that the friends were to take it and move into it in the autumn.[1]

Cowper was delighted with the prospect. "Lady Hesketh," he writes, "is our good angel, by whose aid we are enabled to pass into a better air, and a more walkable country. The imprison-

[1] From Cowper's letters we see that Lady Hesketh had not arrived at Olney by June 12, 1786, and that by June 19, only a week later, the house was already taken and the removal settled.

ment that we have suffered here for so many winters has hurt us both. That we may suffer it no longer, she stoops to Olney, lifts us from our swamp, and sets us down on the elevated grounds of Weston Underwood." The village of Weston, he says, is one of the prettiest villages in England, terminated at one end by the church tower seen through trees and at the other by a very handsome gateway, opening into a fine grove of elms; and the walks round about are at all seasons of the year delightful.[1] The house itself, facing the village street on one side and a garden and orchard on the other, is a pleasant commodious old dwelling; and though in poetical language Cowper might call it a cottage or a hermitage, he reminds us that, when poets speak of such a thing, they always mean a house with six sash windows in front, two comfortable parlours, a smart staircase, and three bedrooms of convenient size; in short, a house answering exactly to the Lodge at Weston, which was to be henceforth his home. Lady Hesketh spared no expense in fitting up the house for the comfort of the new tenants, and they moved into it on the sixteenth of November 1786. Their old house at Olney had been falling into disrepair and

[1] The village and the park seem to have changed very little since Cowper's time, except that the Hall has been pulled down, and the road now runs through "the very handsome gateway" mentioned by the poet. The church is a plain grey building with a short square tower, standing on somewhat higher ground at the western end of the village.

threatened to tumble about their ears; and when it stood empty the candidates for the tenancy were a shoemaker and a publican, who kept the Horse and Groom at Olney. Yet the poet tells us that he could not look for the last time without a pang of regret on the ruinous abode, where he had been unhappy for so many years, and that he felt something like a heartache at bidding farewell to a scene that had nothing in itself to engage affection.

But when the domestic chaos inseparable from the removal to a new house had somewhat subsided, Cowper began thoroughly to enjoy his new surroundings. Though the weather was wintry, the house was always snug and warm, and he could ramble every day in a new direction with short grass under his feet, and come home after a walk of five miles with shoes not too dirty for a drawing-room. On these rambles he was sometimes joined by the Throckmortons, who continued to be the most obliging of neighbours. In their company he walked to the cliff, a beautiful terrace sloping gently down to the Ouse, from the brow of which the view over the valley far surpassed any that could be had from what Cowper calls the hills near Olney. But scarcely had the friends begun to enjoy the pleasantness of their new situation, and to find as much comfort as the season of the year would permit, when their happiness was marred by a heavy bereavement. William Unwin, Cowper's friend and Mrs. Unwin's son, died of a putrid fever

at Winchester, on a tour which he had taken with a friend to the West of England. He is buried in the south aisle of Winchester Cathedral.

After he had finished *The Task* and sent away the last proof-sheet corrected, Cowper very soon felt the need of engaging in some other literary labour in order to divert his thoughts from the melancholy themes on which, in hours of idleness, he was apt to brood. One day, being in great distress of mind, he took up the *Iliad*, and, merely to turn his attention, translated the first twelve lines of the poem. The same necessity pressing on him, he had recourse again and again to the same expedient, till gradually he conceived the plan of making a complete new verse translation of Homer. Upon this task he soon set to work in earnest: it furnished him with unremitting occupation for about six years, proving indeed, though not the most important, by far the most laborious of his literary undertakings. The translation was begun at Olney in 1785, only a few weeks after the completion of *The Task*; and the book was published by subscription in two handsome quarto volumes by Joseph Johnson at London in July 1791.

In the interval his letters contain many allusions to his strenuous labours in the Homeric field, and many valuable critical remarks on the literary art. It is impossible to read them, and similar remarks scattered through his correspondence, without

recognizing the endless pains which Cowper took to give the most perfect polish he could command to every one of the many thousands of verses which flowed from his pen. Yet it may be safely affirmed that no writer has left fewer traces of the literary file than he has done in his writings. All his productions are characterized by a seemingly spontaneous and natural flow, as if they had tripped off his pen without premeditation and without effort. It is only from his own frank and repeated confessions, or rather professions, that we learn the labour that it cost him thus to give to art the appearance of nature. On the other hand, he tells us, and there is every reason to believe him, that he took no pains whatever with the composition of his letters, but reeled them off helter-skelter as fast as his pen would run. The reason for the difference was that while his poems, at least all the longer ones, were intended for the public eye, his letters were written purely for his private friends, and he never dreamed of their being published. He did not, like Pope, sit at his desk with one eye turned to his correspondent and the other, the weather eye, fixed immovably upon the public: his object was simply to chat with a friend at a distance, it was not, like that of the little man at Twickenham, to pose before the world as a paragon of virtue and genius. All such literary artifices, indeed affectations of every sort, were abhorrent to the honest mind of Cowper. That is why the letters

of Pope are so nauseous, and the letters of Cowper so delightful. The letters of the one reek of the midnight oil, the letters of the other breathe the fresh perfume of the flowers and the fields he loved. Many of Cowper's original letters are preserved, and they fully bear out all that he himself tells us as to the perfect ease and fluency with which they were written; for "they are in a clear, beautiful, running hand, and it is rarely that an erasure occurs in them, or the slightest alteration of phrase." [1]

While we may regret that Cowper devoted to a translation of Homer the time and labour which might have been better employed in the composition of original masterpieces, we must admit that in his mental state constant literary occupation was almost a necessity for him, and that so far as he found it in Homer, he benefited personally by his devotion to the task, though the world in general was the loser by it. In the execution of the laborious undertaking he received much cordial assistance of various kinds from friends. Not long after he had put himself into the Homeric harness, he received a visit from his old schoolfellow, the Rev. Walter Bagot, who hearing of the poet's new venture subscribed to the translation, and undertook to procure subscriptions among his friends and

[1] *The Life and Works of William Cowper*, by Robert Southey, vol. i. p. 314. Some of the letters are now exhibited in the poet's house at Olney, which has been turned into a museum. They confirm Southey's description.

acquaintances, many of them people of high rank and wealth. Cowper's old and ever-faithful friend, Joseph Hill, also bestirred himself in beating up for subscribers to the Homer. A new friend, who helped him in the labour of transcribing his translation for the press, was a young man, Samuel Rose. The son of a schoolmaster at Chiswick, he studied at the University of Glasgow, and on his way from Glasgow to London in January 1787, turned six miles out of his way to visit Cowper at Weston, drawn by his admiration of the poet's writings, and charged with compliments for him from some of the Scotch professors. Next year he paid a visit to Weston, when Lady Hesketh was also staying there, and in a letter written at the time he has given a pleasing account of the happy regular life they led in each other's company. They breakfasted about half-past nine, and spent an hour over it in lively conversation, enjoying themselves most wonderfully. Then they separated to their various tasks and occupations; Cowper to translate Homer, Rose to copy what was already translated, Lady Hesketh to work or read, "and Mrs. Unwin, who in everything but her face, is like a kind angel sent from heaven to guard the health of our poet, is busy in domestic concerns. At one, our labours finished, the poet and I walk for two hours. I then drink most plentiful draughts of instruction which flow from his lips, instruction so sweet, and goodness so exquisite, that one *loves* it for its

flavour. At three we return and dress, and the succeeding hour brings dinner upon the table, and collects again the smiling countenances of the family to partake of the neat and elegant meal. Conversation continues till tea-time; when an entertaining volume engrosses our thoughts till the last meal is announced. Conversation again, and then rest before twelve, to enable us to rise again to the same round of innocent, virtuous pleasure. Can you wonder that I should feel melancholy at the thought of leaving such a family; or rather, will you not be surprised at my resolution to depart from this quiet scene on Thursday next?" It was through Rose that Cowper became acquainted with the poetry of Burns, for whose natural genius he expresses admiration, though he wishes that the Scotch bard would divest himself of his "uncouth dialect," and "content himself with writing pure English, in which he appears perfectly qualified to excel."

Several years later, in January 1790, Cowper made the personal acquaintance of a young kinsman, who was to play a very important part in the remainder of the poet's life. This was John Johnson, "Johnny of Norfolk," as Cowper familiarly calls him. He was a grandson of Cowper's maternal uncle, Roger Donne, who had been rector of Catfield in Norfolk. At this time he was a student at Cambridge and made use of a Christmas vacation to introduce himself to his now famous

relative at Weston. Cowper conceived a warm affection for the young man, who, though somewhat bashful, appears to have been very engaging, full of light-hearted gaiety and humour. When he was about to take orders not long afterwards, Cowper warned him to adopt a somewhat more sober deportment, inasmuch as the spectacle of a skipping, curveting, bounding divine might not be altogether to the taste of his parishioners. The youth returned the poet's affection, and when he left Weston, after his first visit, he carried off with him several books of Homer to write out fair from Cowper's foul copy. On the completion of the whole work in September 1790, young Johnson conveyed the precious and voluminous manuscript, the result of five years' labour, to his namesake the publisher in London. "He has gone," says Cowper, "with a box full of poetry, of which I think nobody will plunder him. He has only to say what it is, and there is no commodity I think a freebooter would covet less."

Another indirect result of John Johnson's first visit to Weston was to give birth to one of Cowper's most justly celebrated poems. The young man had observed with what affection Cowper spoke of his mother. The only portrait of her in existence was in possession of her niece Mrs. Bodham, Johnson's aunt, whom the poet had known and loved in her childhood. She was his cousin, Anne Donne, daughter of his mother's brother. Born at Catfield

in Norfolk in 1748, she married in 1781 the Rev. Thomas Bodham, of Mattishall Hall in Norfolk, whom she survived for nearly fifty years, dying at a great age in 1846. On hearing from her nephew of the tender memories which Cowper cherished of his mother, Mrs. Bodham kindly and generously made him a present of the portrait. The arrival of the picture made a deep impression on him; he thanked Mrs. Bodham warmly for it, and celebrated the event in immortal verse.

Among those who took a warm interest in the progress of Cowper's translation of Homer were his attached friends at Weston Park, the Throckmortons. Both Mrs. Throckmorton and her husband's younger brother, Mr. George Throckmorton (afterwards Mr. Courtenay), acted as his amanuensis in making fair copies of his rough manuscript. When Lady Hesketh visited Cowper for the first time at Olney in the summer of 1786, she transcribed Homer for him, but on her departure Mrs. Throckmorton solicited the office of scribe and undertook to be the translator's "lady of the ink-bottle" for the rest of the winter. At the same time, when the move to Weston had been decided on, but not yet carried out, the reserve between the friends wearing off, Mr. Throckmorton talked to Cowper with great pleasure of the comfort he proposed to himself from their winter-evening conversations, his purpose apparently being that the two families should spend their evenings alternately

with each other. These happy anticipations appear to have been perfectly fulfilled so long as the Throckmortons, or Frogs, as Cowper affectionately calls them, continued to reside at Weston. In Cowper's letters there are many pleasing glimpses of the constant and friendly intercourse between the Lodge and the Hall. One day, for example, when he was expecting Lady Hesketh's arrival and was doubtful which of two roads she should take, one being heavy and the other rough, he met the Frogs armed with bows and arrows going to practise at the target in the garden. On putting the question to them, Mrs. Frog cut a caper on the grass-plot and said she would go ride to Olney immediately on purpose to examine the road. Sometimes Mrs. Frog drove him over to pay a morning call on the Chesters at Chicheley. On one of these occasions, dressed in state for the call, and awaiting the arrival of two chaises, with a strong party of ladies, the shy poet looked with envy at a poor old woman coming up the lane, and thought how happy she was to be exempted by her situation in life from making herself fine of a morning and going in a chaise to pay visits. He was more at his ease in a quiet sociable evening at the Hall, while Mr. Throckmorton spoke to him of his Homer, "with sparkling eyes and a face expressive of the highest pleasure," or Mrs. Throckmorton played to him on the harpsichord.

These kind neighbours he lost in March 1792,

when on the death of his father, Sir Robert Throckmorton, Mr. John Throckmorton succeeded to the baronetcy and removed with his wife, now Lady Throckmorton, to the family estate of Bucklands in Berkshire. He was succeeded at Weston Hall by his younger brother George Throckmorton, who had changed his name to Courtenay. His wife, Mrs. Courtenay, was Cowper's correspondent Catharina. She had been a Miss Stapleton, and even before her marriage Cowper had known and liked her at the Hall, where she played and sang like an angel. Her union with Mr. Courtenay, which took place in the summer of 1792, made the poet happy. She and her husband proved no less kind and friendly neighbours than their predecessors. When Cowper went to the Hall to pay his first visit to them after their marriage, Mr. Courtenay flew into the court to meet him, and when he entered the parlour Catharina sprang into his arms.

But the poet went that summer day alone to the Hall. A great sorrow had befallen him. For some years Mrs. Unwin's health had been failing. In January 1789 she fell on the gravel walk, then slippery with ice, and though she neither broke nor dislocated any bones, she received an injury which for a time crippled her entirely. She recovered the power of walking and resumed her household duties, but it may be doubted whether she ever was quite strong again. In the following summer Cowper

mentions that the day before he had dined alone with Mr. Throckmorton at the Hall, the ways being miry and Mrs. Unwin no longer able to walk in pattens or clogs. During the next two years she suffered almost constantly from a pain in her side, which nearly forbade her the use of the pen, so that she could not transcribe Cowper's verses.

But much worse was to follow. One Saturday in December 1791, while Cowper was at his desk near the window and Mrs. Unwin was seated in her chair at the fireside, he suddenly heard her cry, "Oh! Mr. Cowper, don't let me fall!" He sprang to her and with difficulty caught and raised her as she was falling with her chair to the floor. She had been seized with a violent dizziness, which affected her sight and her speech, though she did not lose consciousness. It was a paralytic stroke. However, the symptoms gradually abated, and she slowly recovered. But in the following May (1792) she was struck again, this time much more severely: her speech became almost unintelligible, her features distorted, she could hardly open her eyes, and she lost entirely the use of her right hand and arm. Nevertheless she again partially recovered: electricity was applied with seemingly good results. Early in June her speech was nearly perfect, her eyes open almost all day, and her step greatly improved. By the middle of the month, though still feeble, she could walk down and up stairs,

leaning with one hand on Cowper's arm and the other on the balustrade. In this sad and anxious time Cowper seems to have borne up wonderfully, exerting himself to the utmost to repay by unremitting attention to the beloved invalid all the care that for so many years she had lavished on him. Writing to his publisher in July he says: "Days, weeks, and months escape me, and nothing is done, nor is it possible for me to do anything that demands study and attention in the present state of our family. I am the electrician; I am the escort into the garden; I am wanted, in short, on a hundred little occasions that occur every day in Mrs. Unwin's present state of infirmity; and I see no probability that I shall be less occupied in the same indispensable duties for a long time to come." Indeed, the two fast friends had seen their brightest hours together, and the clouded evening of their life drew on apace. Yet even now the descending sun broke through the gathering clouds to bid them a last, a sweet farewell. They had made a new friend who was to cheer and comfort them both for a while in their sad decline. The friend was William Hayley.

Immediately on the conclusion of his long Homeric labours Cowper, to whose mental health steady occupation was essential, cast about for something else to do, and thought for a while that he had found it in editing and annotating a splendid edition of Milton's poetical works, which was to

be published by Joseph Johnson, and illustrated with thirty pictures by the painter Fuseli, a man of fine literary taste, who had criticized minutely the proof-sheets of Cowper's Homer. In spite of the poet's warm admiration for Milton and his intimate acquaintance with his poetry, the office of editor and commentator imposed an irksome restraint on his original genius, curbing and bridling his Pegasus even more effectually than Homer had done; it weighed on instead of lightening his spirits, and had to be ultimately renounced. But it brought incidentally the advantage of making him acquainted with Hayley, who, happening to be then engaged on a *Life of Milton*, and reading in the newspapers a paragraph which described himself and Cowper as rivals in the Miltonic field, wrote to the poet a generous letter full of admiration for his genius, and disclaiming all intentions of doing anything that would clash with the projected edition of Milton's works. Cowper answered in the same spirit, and the two poets became warm friends.

For a poet Hayley was in his time, though his poetry has long passed into oblivion. Indeed, the literary critics of the day, some of whom had poured contempt on Cowper's first volume, hailed the first public appearance of Hayley as that of a new and bright star on the poetical horizon. They perceived in him an almost unrivalled excellence, an imagination truly creative, and a judgement critically

exact. The inimitable pen of this masterly writer, we are informed, drew animated portraits with admirable truth and precision. He combined the fire and invention of Dryden with the wit and ease of Prior, and if his versification was a shade less polished than that of Pope, it was very much more various. Meretricious ornaments he studiously eschewed, and though his ideas were conceived in the finest vein of poetical frenzy, they were expressed with the most elegant perspicuity and the chastest simplicity. To crown all, he believed in revealed religion. This was enough. The bard was swept up to the seventh poetical heaven in a halo of glory and a whirlwind of praise. The public, stimulated by the blast of the critical trumpet, purchased his works with a perseverance worthy of a better cause. They were distributed as prizes, they were bestowed as presents : the perusal of them reformed the character of intractable young ladies, and kindled a flame in the bosom of nursery-gardeners, who refused to accept payment for their wares from the great man when they discovered his identity. The surly Thurlow complimented him. Pitt offered him the laureateship. In short, he stood for a time on the lofty pedestal which had been lately vacated by the imperishable Pye, and was afterwards adorned by the immortal Tupper. But it could not last. The time came to knock him down and put up another in his place. The thing was soon done.

The brazen trumpet again rang out: the public gaped at the last new idol; and poor Hayley was forgotten.

But if he was an indifferent poet, Hayley was an affectionate friend, as free as Cowper himself from those mean passions of envy and jealousy which, in the opinion of a censorious world, are peculiarly apt to wring the breasts of authors. He used all his influence with Thurlow to extract from him a pension for Cowper. He artfully presented the chancellor's bastard daughter with a copy of Cowper's poems: he breakfasted with the great man himself, and exerted his utmost powers of personal fascination, which were considerable, but it was all to no purpose; for though, being a man of sanguine temperament, he left the breakfast table in high feather under the impression that he had softened the nether millstone of Thurlow's heart, nothing but disappointment came of the interview.

However, Hayley did much better for Cowper than get him a pension. He visited him at Weston in May 1792, and by his amiable manners, his buoyant, lively disposition, and agreeable conversation he won the hearts and cheered the lives of the two recluses. On his side Hayley was no less charmed with them. Writing from Weston to his friend the painter Romney, he says: "Often have I wished to convey you by magic to my side, when you were not near me; but I believe I never wished it more ardently than I have done under this very kind

poetical roof. You would be pleased here, as I am, and think with me, that my brother bard is one of the most interesting creatures in the world, from the powerful united influence of rare genius and singular misfortunes, with the additional charm of mild and engaging manners. Then as to the grand article of females (for what is a scene without a woman in it?), here is a muse of seventy, that I perfectly idolize. Here is a wonderful scene; it would affect you, I know, as it does me. Few things in life have given me such heartfelt satisfaction as my visit to this house; and the more so as my kind hosts seem to regard me as sent to them by Providence, for our general delight and advantage." [1] And in the biographical notices which he interspersed in his posthumous edition of Cowper's letters he thus writes of his first visit to Weston: "My host, though now in his sixty-first year, appeared as happily exempt from all the infirmities of advanced life, as friendship could wish him to be; and his more elderly companion, not materially oppressed by age, discovered a benevolent alertness of character that seemed to promise a continuance of their domestic comfort. Their reception of me was kindness itself: I was enchanted to find that the manners and conversation of Cowper resembled his poetry, charming by unaffected elegance, and

[1] Hayley somewhat exaggerates Mrs. Unwin's age. Having been born in 1724 she was then (1792) about sixty-eight. Cowper, born in 1731, was about seven years younger.

the graces of a benevolent spirit. I looked with affectionate veneration and pleasure on the lady, who having devoted her life and fortune to the service of this tender and sublime genius, in watching over him with maternal vigilance through many years of the darkest calamity, appeared to be now enjoying a reward justly due to the noblest exertions of friendship, in contemplating the health and the renown of the poet whom she had the happiness to preserve. It seemed hardly possible to survey human nature in a more touching and a more satisfactory point of view. Their tender attention to each other, their simple devout gratitude for the mercies which they had experienced together, and their constant, but unaffected, propensity to impress on the mind and heart of a new friend, the deep sense, which they incessantly felt, of their mutual obligations to each other, afforded me very singular gratification."

The mutual happiness of the friends in each other's society was sadly dashed by Mrs. Unwin's second stroke of paralysis, which befel her one afternoon when Cowper and Hayley, after a morning passed in study, were out walking together. The melancholy news was communicated to them on their return by Mr. Samuel Greatheed, a dissenting minister of Newport Pagnell, who happened to be calling at the Lodge. Hayley was able to soothe his friend's agitation, and his tender attentions to the invalid endeared him still more to the poet. After

spending more than a fortnight with his friends at Weston, he left them on the first of June, stealing quietly out of the house in the morning lest he should wake Mrs. Unwin, and leaving a pencilled note for Cowper in a song-book.

But before he departed it had been arranged between them that if Mrs. Unwin's health permitted it, she and Cowper should pay him a visit in the course of the summer at his home in Sussex. Hayley then resided at Eartham, a small estate delightfully situated on high ground about six miles from Chichester and five from Arundel. He had inherited the property from his father, and had enlarged the house and embellished the garden. The pleasure-grounds, interspersed with rural grottoes and ivied seats, occupied three sides of a hill crowned with an arbour. House and grounds commanded beautiful views over a deep fertile valley enclosed by wooded hills, and away to the sea, nine miles distant, and the Isle of Wight looking like a thick cloud on the horizon. Gibbon, who visited Hayley at Eartham, and whose portrait hung in the library, called the place a little Paradise.

As the summer wore on, Mrs. Unwin's health gradually improved, and in spite of many fears and misgivings on Cowper's part, it was finally decided that they should go together to Eartham at the beginning of August. It was a tremendous undertaking for two people who had lived so quiet and secluded a life, and had never been more than a

few miles distant from home for many years. A coach and four was sent from London to convey them. Johnny of Norfolk, Cowper's man-servant Samuel Roberts, his wife, and the little dog Beau, went with them. At eight o'clock in the morning of the first of August 1792 the coach drew up at the door of the Lodge. Samuel mounted the box, the rest got in, and they all drove off in good spirits. The journey occupied three days: the weather was very hot and the roads dusty. They lodged the first night at the Mitre in Barnet, where they found their friend Mr. Rose, who had walked thither from his house in Chancery Lane to meet them. His presence and conversation afforded a welcome relief to the weary and jaded spirits of the two unaccustomed travellers after their long confinement and jolting in the coach. Unfortunately the inn was very noisy, and Cowper was driven almost to despair for Mrs. Unwin, lest she should get no rest. But though she was so weary that she could hardly speak, she slept well and rose refreshed. On the second day they dined at Kingston, where Cowper met his old friend, General Cowper, whom he had not seen for thirty years, and at night they lodged at Ripley, six miles from Guildford, in a quiet inn which they had all to themselves. There they both slept well and in the morning felt quite rested. Next day brought them to Eartham about ten o'clock at night. Darkness had fallen and the moon had risen when they crossed the Sussex downs,

and Cowper, who had never seen a hill in his life, confesses that he was daunted by their "tremendous height" looming dim above him in the moonlight. Mrs. Unwin bore the journey better than Cowper dared to hope, and after the undisturbed slumbers of two good nights at Eartham she was more cheerful than she had been for many months.

In Hayley's hospitable home the two friends spent six happy weeks. The weather was at first fine, and in the brisker air and on the drier chalk soil Mrs. Unwin could, with support, walk better than at Weston. Sometimes she would pace the gravel walks of the hanging gardens; sometimes she would be drawn in a chaise by Hayley's son, Tom, and a servant lad, while Cowper or Johnny of Norfolk pushed behind; sometimes she would sit with Cowper in the bower on the top of the hill, tranquilly enjoying the distant prospects and the air blowing sweet and fresh. But she could not amuse herself by knitting or reading, for her sight remained imperfect and her fingers refused to perform their office. Cowper himself slept much better than at home and his appetite was improved: Johnny of Norfolk thought him looking ten times younger than he had ever seen him before: he laughed from morning to night and was quite blooming and active. But surrounded by strange objects he found his attention so dissipated that he could hardly even write a letter; and he confessed himself so unaccountably local in the use of his pen

that, like the man in the fable who could leap nowhere but at Rhodes, he was incapable of writing anywhere but at Weston.

However, he found plenty of occupation. The morning hours which could be spared for books were chiefly devoted to revising and correcting, with Hayley's help, all the translations which he had made of Milton's Latin and Italian poems for the projected edition of his works; and after dinner the friends generally amused themselves with composing jointly a rapid metrical version of Andreini's *Adamo*, an Italian drama published at Milan in 1613, which Hayley, following a hint of Voltaire's, supposed to have influenced Milton's choice of the subject for his great epic. Cowper, too, gave some time to sitting for his likeness to the painter Romney, who was among the guests at Eartham. The portrait, drawn in crayons, was esteemed by his friends very like. It is perhaps the best known of the three portraits of the poet. Shortly before his departure for Eartham he had been painted by Abbot, and in the following year he was painted by Lawrence.

Among the guests at Eartham during Cowper's stay was Mrs. Charlotte Smith, who was then engaged in writing her best novel, *The Old Manor House*. The early part of the day she devoted to composition in her own room, and in the evening she read to the assembled party what she had written, charming her hearers by the simplicity and grace

of her elocution and delivery. Cowper repeatedly declared that among his early associates, some of whom prided themselves on rapid composition, he knew of none who could have composed so rapidly and well. Another visitor who came to Eartham to meet Cowper was his correspondent the Rev. James Hurdis, rector of Bishopsgate in Sussex. Deeply affected by the death of his sister, he had resigned his living and was about to settle at Oxford, where he afterwards became Professor of Poetry. He and Cowper met at Eartham for the first and only time. Nor among the friends gathered at Hayley's pleasant home should Cowper's little dog, Beau, be forgotten. He had ridden in the coach with his master from Weston, and when Hayley, his son Tom, and the painter, Romney, set off to the sea to bathe, Beau went with them. Whether he enjoyed battling with the salt waves on the beach as much as swimming in the sluggish waters of the Ouse and gathering water-lilies on its calm bosom, is not recorded by history.

A greater contrast can hardly be conceived than that which was presented by these peaceful scenes at Eartham, and the scenes of tumult and horror which were then being enacted at Paris, whither Cowper's friends the Throckmortons had gone on a visit. For Paris was then at the height of the revolutionary frenzy. While the poet worked at his books with Hayley in the quiet library with its windows looking away over the beautiful landscape,

or accompanied Mrs. Unwin in her walks in the garden, or sat with her in the arbour, fanned by the fresh breezes from the distant sea, the palace of the Tuileries was being stormed, the Swiss Guard cut to pieces, the King and Queen made captive, and the dreadful September massacres were being perpetrated at the prisons. It was with a great sense of relief that Cowper learned that Sir John and Lady Throckmorton had quitted Paris two days before the terrible tenth of August.

So in happy social intercourse, literary occupation, and enjoyment of nature the weeks at Eartham glided pleasantly away. But the days were shortening, the autumn was advancing, the weather after the first fortnight had turned wet and stormy, and Cowper began to long to be at home again. The beautiful scenery and manifold charms of Eartham, he assures his correspondents, had not alienated his affections from the peaceful, though less splendid, Weston; the prospects which met his eye from every window, of woods like forests and hills like mountains, rather deepened than alleviated his natural melancholy, and he preferred the snug concealment of the Buckinghamshire village, which to him was the dearest spot on earth. So on the seventeenth of September the two friends set out for home. With a heavy heart Cowper took leave of Hayley, with a heavy heart he bade farewell to Tom at the foot of the chalk hill; but soon after his troubles gushed from his eyes, and then he was

better. They spent four days on the return journey, for it had been agreed that they should dine one day with the poet's kinsman, General Cowper, and for that purpose it was necessary that they should pass a night at Kingston, near which the General lived. Cowper looked forward to the visit with great trepidation of spirits; but it passed off well, the two old friends parted, never to meet again, and Cowper and Mrs. Unwin returned more cheerfully in the dark to Kingston. That night they rested well, and next morning soon after eight set off for London, which Cowper was to look upon also for the last time. At ten in the morning they arrived at Mr. Rose's door in Chancery Lane, drank chocolate with him, and proceeded on their journey, Mr. Rose riding with them as far as St. Albans. From there they met with no impediment; in the dark and in a storm they reached their own back door at eight o'clock at night.

Soon after their return Cowper attempted to settle down to his task work at Milton, but it was to little purpose. The stream of his genius refused to flow in a prescribed channel: his Pegasus would not gallop under a bit and snaffle. In vain did he set his teeth and sit down to his desk with a good pen, a full ink-bottle, and a clean sheet of paper spread out before him: after writing and blotting a few lines he had to relinquish the attempt. The ghost of Milton seemed to haunt him and to goad him with continual reproaches for his neglect. He

turned from the ungrateful task and buried himself in a revision of his Homer, which was for him a labour of love to be performed of his own free will and at his own time, not a matter of contract to be executed to date for a bookseller. In order that he might give the whole of the day to waiting on Mrs. Unwin, who in the enfeebled state of her body and mind needed and exacted all his attention, he used to rise at six and fag at Homer, fasting, till eleven o'clock, when he breakfasted. In winter he was up before daybreak while the owls were still hooting, and he sat by the window to catch the first glimmer of daylight, sometimes so cold that the pen slipped from his benumbed fingers. When the weather was fair, he regularly walked with Mrs. Unwin in the orchard at the back of the house, where he had made a new path sheltered from the north and facing the south-western sun. But Mrs. Unwin was now so crippled that on these walks she had always to be supported between two and could only creep. In the evening he read to her his revised translation of Homer or some other book, such as Baker's *Chronicle*, in which he hoped in time to be as well versed as Sir Roger de Coverley, who used to keep the book lying on his hall window and occasionally unbend his mind, after the serious business of hunting foxes or sentencing poachers, by perusing the annals of his country.

The reason which induced Cowper to revise his Homer was one, he said, which any poet may guess

if he will only thrust his hand into his pocket. At the same time, in deference to criticisms which had been passed on his translation, he attempted to adapt it to the over-delicate taste of the day by rendering the Latinisms into plain English, by expunging the occasional inversions which had given dignity to the verse, and by planing down the rougher lines, which the poet himself had deemed indispensable to secure variety of cadence. When all these changes had been made, he hoped to give to far the greater number of his verses a flow as smooth as oil, to convert the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into plain turnpike, along which the most fastidious or squeamish reader might glide without experiencing a single jolt to distract his attention or disturb his slumber. Of this excessive smoothness of versification Cowper himself decidedly disapproved. "A critic of the present day," he says, "serves a poem as a cook serves a dead turkey, when she fastens the legs of it to a post, and draws out all the sinews. For this we may thank Pope; but unless we could imitate him in the closeness and compactness of his expression, as well as in the smoothness of his numbers, we had better drop the imitation, which serves no other purpose than to emasculate and weaken all we write. Give me a manly, rough line, with a deal of meaning in it, rather than a whole poem full of musical periods, that have nothing but their oily smoothness to recommend them!"

But while in his Homer, as in all his original

poems, Cowper took the utmost pains to satisfy his own fine sense of literary workmanship, and to meet all reasonable and even some unreasonable demands of criticism, he never replied to any of his critics in print. Like another wise and magnanimous man, the target of many envenomed shafts—David Hume —he disdained to engage in the squabbling and scuffling, the clouting of heads and the clawing of faces, which goes by the name of literary controversy.[1] With a sensitiveness and delicacy of nature more than feminine, he happily combined a robust and manly strain of thought which made him rise superior to petty wounds that would have rankled in weaker natures. His equanimity was never ruffled, or at all events never seriously disturbed, by the attacks of critics. He could afford to disregard them and to bide his time. *His* works will last with the English language: *their* criticisms have long been forgotten.

Cowper had other and deeper than pecuniary motives for applying himself zealously to Homer. The occupation served to divert his mind for a time from sad sights and melancholy reflections. His spirits were low, and as time went on they sank lower and lower. Even shortly after his return from

[1] "Answers by Reverends and Right Reverends came out two or three in a year; and I found, by Dr. Warburton's railing, that the books were beginning to be esteemed in good company. However, I had a fixed resolution, which I inflexibly maintained, never to reply to any body; and not being very irascible in my temper, I have easily kept myself clear of all literary squabbles" (David Hume, *My Own Life*).

Eartham he wrote to Hayley in a tone of despondence that all his sprightly chords seemed broken; he thought that perhaps the approach of winter was the cause, but alas! spring and summer were to bring few joys to him again. No doubt a principal source of his unhappiness was the spectacle, always before his eyes, of Mrs. Unwin's steady decline. Her eyes and her fingers never recovered the powers they had lost by the second stroke of palsy. She never knitted again. The knitting-needles, once so shining, now rusted unused. She who had been wont to rise by candle-light because the daylight was not long enough for the important business of mending stockings and other housewifely cares, now sat in her corner silent, with idle hands, gazing at the fire. For a while Cowper cheated, or tried to cheat himself, with the hope that she would still recover what she had lost, that she would yet read and work again as of old. But at last he saw that the hope was vain, and wrote the pathetic verses, *To Mary*, which will embalm her memory and his so long as the English language endures. They are believed to be the last original poem which he composed at Weston.

It would have been well for her and for him if mere bodily weakness had been the worst that befel Mrs. Unwin in the evening of her days; but unhappily with the decay of her faculties her character underwent a great change, and she who for years had found all her happiness in ministering to her

afflicted friend, and seemed to have no thought but for his welfare, now became querulous and exacting, forgetful of him and mindful apparently only of herself. Unable to move out of her chair without help, or to walk across the room unless supported by two people, her speech at times almost unintelligible, she deprived him of all his wonted exercises, both bodily and mental, as she did not choose that he should leave her for a moment, or ever use a pen or a book except when he read to her. To these demands he responded with all the devotion of gratitude and affection; he was assiduous in his attentions to her, but the strain told heavily on his strength.

It is no wonder that in these melancholy circumstances the oppression of spirits under which he had laboured for so many years should grow ever heavier. In one of his letters he mentions that he suffered from a dejection such as he had never known since he commenced author, except when he was absolutely laid by. In another he speaks of rising in the morning "like an infernal frog out of Acheron, covered with the ooze and mud of melancholy"; in another, he says that he seems to himself to be scrambling always in the dark, among rocks and precipices, without a guide, but with an enemy ever at his heels, ready to push him headlong. Above all, his religious delusion rose to a pitch of horror which threatened to overcast his whole mental horizon, and to extinguish the last glimmerings of

reason and hope. He was haunted with forebodings of some overwhelming evil: his imagination was terrified by an endless train of horrible phantoms: he suffered agonies of despair. His dreams were frightful. One night, for instance, he seemed to be taking a final leave of his dwelling and of every thing with which he had been most familiar, on the evening before his execution. He felt the tenderest regret at the separation, and looked about for something durable to carry with him as a memorial. The iron hasp of the garden door presenting itself, he was on the point of taking that; but recollecting that the heat of the fire in which he was going to be tormented would fuse the metal, and that it would therefore only serve to increase his insupportable misery, he left it, and awoke in all the horror with which the reality of the visionary terrors could have filled him. With such extremities of torture could a gloomy religious creed rack the mind of one of the best and most innocent men who ever dignified and beautified our earth by their presence.

No doubt the mental decay of Mrs. Unwin was one of the causes which contributed most powerfully to plunge Cowper into this abysm of misery. It was not merely that he was doomed daily and hourly to witness sufferings which wrung his heart and which he was powerless to relieve, but that he no longer received from her those pious consolations which her milder faith and her old unshaken trust in the divine goodness had enabled her to minister

to him in his darkest hours. Thus deprived of spiritual guidance at home, he looked for it abroad, and unhappily he found it in Samuel Teedon, the pious, ignorant, foolish, self-sufficient schoolmaster of Olney, whose clumsy compliments, clownish manners, dull conversation, and ridiculous accounts of his petty ailments Cowper in his happier days had not failed to make the theme of delicate banter. This awkward booby, this presumptuous ass, whose piety, if it was sincere, was perhaps not wholly disinterested, since he received through Cowper's agency a regular allowance in money, which he liberally repaid in prayer, was now consulted by the poet and Mrs. Unwin as a sort of divine oracle. When Cowper had had a particularly bad dream, or on waking in the morning imagined he heard voices speaking to him, he inquired of the Lord by the mouth of Samuel Teedon as to what these things might mean, and in due time received gracious and reassuring answers. When he hesitated about going on with the edition of Milton, which failed so miserably, the case was laid before the schoolmaster, who, after spreading it out as usual on the mercy-seat, announced that the Lord encouraged him to proceed "by shining on his addresses, and quickening him by his word." The letters which Cowper wrote to this poor driveller are melancholy witnesses to the wreck of a fine intellect; and in reading them we cannot but wish that when he sought the Lord at the schoolhouse of Olney, a

voice had answered him as Colonel White answered Barebones's Parliament when they told him that they were seeking the Lord: "Then you may go elsewhere, for to my certain knowledge, He has not been here these many years."

So things went from bad to worse at Weston. To add to all their other troubles pecuniary anxieties were creeping in on them. Neither of the two friends was now able to take charge of their domestic affairs, and though Mrs. Unwin persisted in keeping the purse-strings in her poor feeble hands, there was no proper check on the household expenditure. Unworthy objects of their bounty took advantage of their weakness. All went to wrack and ruin.

Yet some temporary alleviation of their sorrows was afforded; a last gleam of sunset light shone on the sad household at Weston, with the visit of friends in the autumn of 1793. Mr. Rose arrived early in October, bringing with him the painter, Lawrence, to whom Cowper sat for his portrait. Mr. Rose had been commissioned by Lord Spencer to invite Cowper and his guests to his seat of Althorp in Northamptonshire, where the historian, Gibbon, was about to pay a long visit. The invitation was attractive, and all Cowper's guests urged him to go; but the constitutional shyness of the poet conspired with the infirm state of Mrs. Unwin's health to prevent him from meeting his famous contemporary. He sent a polite refusal through Mr. Rose. A few days after Mr. Rose's arrival, Johnny of Norfolk,

now the Reverend John Johnson, joined the party at Weston, and early in November Hayley came on his second visit. He found Cowper apparently well and enlivened by the society of his two favourite friends, Johnson and Rose. The poet still possessed completely all the admirable faculties of his mind and all the native tenderness of his heart; yet there was something indescribable in his appearance which alarmed Hayley with apprehensions of coming evil. During his visit the two authors kept each other busy, Cowper revising Hayley's *Life of Milton*, and Hayley doing the same for his friend's Homer, while Mrs. Unwin sat in her corner by the fire, sometimes silent, listening to the patter of the rain on the windows, sometimes laughing at the two friends, or interrupting them with a question or a remark, sometimes, when no heed was paid to her, holding a conversation with herself.

When Hayley had gone after a fortnight's visit, Lady Hesketh arrived about the middle of November. Knowing the terrible change which had taken place in Mrs. Unwin, and how severely it must have affected Cowper, she found him better than she expected. But the blow, which the watchful Hayley had apprehended, fell on the poet in the second week of January 1794, and broke him finally. His spirits wholly deserted him. He ceased to work and to correspond with his friends. For six days he sat "still and silent as death," and took no other food during that time than a morsel of bread dipped

in wine and water. When every other remedy had failed, the medical attendant suggested that, as the only remaining chance, Mrs. Unwin should invite him to go out with her. She was induced, not without the exercise of tact and management, to make the experiment, and observing that it was a fine morning, said she should like to try to walk. Cowper at once rose, took her by the arm, and the spell which had bound him to his chair was broken.

Yet though he lived, no improvement took place in his mental condition. The arrival of Hayley in the spring, who came at much personal inconvenience to attend to his unhappy friend, seemed to give no pleasure to the sufferer; he testified not the least glimmering of satisfaction at the appearance of a guest whom he used to receive with the most lively expressions of affectionate delight. During Hayley's stay a letter came from Lord Spencer announcing that it was His Majesty's intention to grant Cowper a pension of three hundred pounds a year for the residue of his life. But the news came too late to bring him the smallest comfort.[1] As time went on, in spite of the unremitting attentions of Lady Hesketh, who stayed at Weston and devoted herself to the care of the two suffering friends, Cowper grew rather worse than better. He hardly ate, he was worn to a shadow, he did nothing

[1] The official document recording the grant is now exhibited in Cowper's house at Olney. It is signed by George the Third and Pitt. The pension was to date from July 5, 1794.

but pace incessantly up and down in his study or his bedroom: he lived in a constant state of terror dreadful to behold, expecting daily and even hourly to be carried off by the Devil. This lasted for about eighteen months from the spring of 1794 till the latter end of July 1795. Then the Rev. John Johnson came to Weston from Norfolk, and with affectionate solicitude and tact persuaded the two invalids to accompany him on a visit to Norfolk, in the hope that a complete change of scene might be beneficial to both. Cowper was reluctant to leave the beautiful and peaceful Weston, to which, in spite of all he had suffered there, his heart clung with constant affection. He had a presentiment, which proved true, that he should see it no more; and on a panel of the window shutter in his bedroom —the bedroom overlooking the quiet garden where he had so often walked with Mrs. Unwin—he wrote in pencil the sad lines:

> Farewell, dear scenes, for ever closed to me;
> Oh, for what sorrows must I now exchange ye![1]

From Weston the party drove through Bedford without stopping, and spent the first night of the journey at the quiet little country town of St. Neots. There in the moonlight Cowper walked up and down with his kinsman in the churchyard, conversing composedly and almost cheerfully on the subject

[1] The panel has been removed from the house at Weston and is now exhibited at the poet's house at Olney. The inscription is blurred but still legible.

of Thomson's *Seasons*; and there, with the moonlight sleeping on its calm water, he saw for the last time his beloved Ouse.

In August, thinking that the invalids might benefit by sea air, Mr. Johnson took them to the village of Mundsley on the Norfolk coast. The cliffs there are high, the sands firm and level, and pacing on them the poet, if he could not recover his lost peace of mind, seemed to be soothed by the monotonous sound of the breakers. But his heart went back to Weston, and in a few letters written by him from Mundsley, he speaks of the dear village with fond regret. After various changes of abode the invalids finally settled with Mr. Johnson at his house in East Dereham. There, a few months after their settlement, Mrs. Unwin died on the seventeenth of September 1796, in her seventy-second year. Cowper was too sunk in melancholy even to take notice of her last illness; yet he must have been aware of it, for on the morning of her death, when the servant opened his window, he asked her, "Sally, is there life above stairs?" He went to her bedside as usual after breakfast that morning, then he returned to the room below and requested Mr. Johnson to read to him Miss Burney's novel *Camilla*. The reading was soon interrupted, and Mr. Johnson was beckoned out of the room to learn that all was over. The news affected Cowper so little, that after hearing it he allowed his kinsman to resume the reading of the novel. But when

they led him into the chamber of death, and he saw her lying on the bed, for ever still, he gave way to a burst of emotion. Then he quitted the room and never spoke of her again. They buried her in Dereham churchyard at night by torchlight, lest the sight and sounds of the last sad procession should agitate him unduly.

He lingered for a few years more, always plunged in the deepest, the most hopeless melancholy. Yet he allowed them to read to him, and he listened to his own poems in silence; only he forbade them to read to him *John Gilpin*. He was even induced to resume his long-interrupted revision of Homer, and he seemed calmer while he was engaged in the old familiar task; his very breathing was observed to be longer and easier while he sat with bowed head over his desk. Having once begun, he worked steadily, and completed the revision on the eighth of March 1799. A few days later he wrote his last original poem, *The Castaway*, founded on an incident in Anson's *Voyages* which he had read long before. His work was now done, and the hour of rest was not far off. At the end of January 1800, symptoms of dropsy appeared in his feet and ankles, and gradually increased. By the end of February he ceased to come downstairs; by the end of March he was confined to his bedroom. When a doctor asked him how he felt, he answered, "I feel unutterable despair." The night before he died, being very weak, they offered him a cordial, but he

rejected it, saying, "What can it signify?" They were his last words. Next morning, Friday, the twenty-fifth day of April 1800, there was death on his face, but he survived till five o'clock in the afternoon, when his long sufferings and sorrows quietly ceased. All that is mortal of him rests in Dereham church, not far from the dust of Mary Unwin. Over his grave Lady Hesketh caused a monument to be erected, and Hayley composed for it a copy of verses containing a tribute to his departed friend, a tribute which all who know and love Cowper will acknowledge to be just:

> Ye, who with warmth the public triumph feel
> Of talents dignified by sacred zeal,
> Here, to devotion's bard devoutly just,
> Pay your fond tribute due to COWPER'S dust!
> England, exulting in his spotless fame,
> Ranks with her dearest sons his favourite name.
> Sense, fancy, wit, suffice not all to raise
> So clear a title to affection's praise;
> His highest honours to the heart belong:
> His virtues form'd the magic of his song.

II

WILLIAM ROBERTSON SMITH

By the death of William Robertson Smith this country has lost one of its greatest scholars and ablest men. No one could have been brought even casually into contact with him without feeling that he was in the presence of a remarkable man. The extent and accuracy of his information on almost any topic that might be started, the freshness and originality of his views, the electric quickness of his apprehension, the vivacity and energy of his manner, the ease, precision, and force with which he expressed himself, combined with the physical characteristics of the man—the slight, almost puny, yet sinewy and vigorous frame, the eager, expressive face, the high, piercing intonation of his voice—made up a personality which, once seen, was not easily forgotten. But it was reserved for those whom he honoured with his friendship to know that, with a lucidity of intellect which no sophistry could impose upon, and a firmness of character which nothing could

daunt, he united a perfect sweetness and openness of disposition, and an unfailing cheerfulness and buoyancy of temper, which rendered him the most delightful of friends and companions, and supported him at last through years of ill-health and severe physical pain with a constancy not less than heroic.

But it is not my intention to attempt an analysis of Robertson Smith's character. Rather I would endeavour to indicate the scope and importance of the work which he accomplished and initiated. It seems the more desirable to do so because the real significance of his life-work has been to a certain extent obscured by his versatility, by the many parts he played, and by the conspicuous ability which he displayed in all of them. To the majority of his fellow countrymen in Scotland he was known chiefly as a controversialist, who vindicated the right of free historical inquiry against the narrow dogmatism of theologians who would have stifled the quest for truth as dangerous, presumptuous, and profane. To Orientalists at home and abroad he was known primarily as one of the best Semitic scholars of the day. And to the reading public in this country and America his name was perhaps most familiar as that of the editor of the last edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. In all these capacities Robertson Smith did valuable work. His controversy with the Free Church, though it ended in his removal from the Chair of Hebrew which he occupied in

the Free Church College at Aberdeen, was of immense public service in promoting a more liberal and rational tone of thought on theological subjects, not in the Free Church only but in Scotland generally. Of his contributions to Semitic scholarship it is not for me to speak, their value has been attested by some of the most distinguished of living or recently deceased Orientalists, as well as by the successive calls which he received to fill, first the Lord Almoner's Readership in Arabic, and afterwards the Professorship of Arabic, in the University of Cambridge. But of Robertson Smith's qualifications as editor of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* I may venture to speak from personal knowledge, as I lived on terms of intimacy with him during the latter years of his editorship, and was privileged to contribute some articles to the book. He seemed then to me, as I believe he must have seemed to most of the contributors, an absolutely ideal editor of such a work. The range and exactness of his knowledge were such as, in the course of a life mostly spent at the Universities, I have never known equalled or even approached. The lightning-like rapidity and penetration of his mind, which led him straight to the heart of a subject through a maze of bewildering details, were also, in my experience, unique, and did at least as much as his immense learning to fit him for carrying through the press a work which aims at being a clear and comprehensive summary of human knowledge. To

these qualifications he added an unfailing tact and courtesy, combined with perfect firmness and decision, in dealing with men; a practical sagacity and good sense which made him on all subjects the oracle of his friends; and an aptitude for business to which his publisher has recently borne the most emphatic testimony. Any notice of Robertson Smith's multifarious activity would be incomplete which did not mention that he held for several years the important post of University Librarian at Cambridge, and that in his younger days he acted as assistant and demonstrator to the distinguished professor of Natural Philosophy or Physics at the University of Edinburgh, Professor Tait. In this last capacity it has been said of Smith that "his deftness at experiments and clearness of exposition were quite extraordinary, and the man commanded almost as much admiration from the students as did the master, which is saying a good deal." The attention which in these early days he paid to mathematical physics bore permanent fruit in the publication of some mathematical papers which are still, I understand, regarded as classical by mathematicians.

Yet when we have enumerated all these varied capacities in which Robertson Smith did so much admirable work, we have still not touched on the side of his mental activity which was most productive of important results, and by which he will be best remembered by posterity. It was by his researches

into the history of religion in general and of the Semitic religions in particular that Robertson Smith has influenced most deeply, if not as yet most obviously, the thought of this generation; and so numerous and fruitful are the lines of inquiry which he struck out that his influence is likely to grow rather than diminish for some time to come. The method which in his hands proved so powerful an instrument in opening up new and rich veins of thought was what is known as the comparative method. As few, perhaps, even of educated readers have a definite notion of the principles of the comparative method in its application to the study of religion, and of its bearing on many profound practical problems which are pressing on us for solution now, and which loom still larger in the future, some general observations on the subject may not be out of place here, in so far as they enable the reader to apprehend more clearly Robertson Smith's place in the rapidly-moving stream of contemporary thought.

The idea of regarding the religions of the world not dogmatically but historically—in other words, not as systems of truth or falsehood to be demonstrated or refuted, but as phenomena of consciousness to be studied like any other aspect of human nature—is one which seems hardly to have suggested itself before the nineteenth century. Certainly the systematic development of the conception is a product of that unparalleled analytic or scientific activity which

in the course of the present century [1] has enlarged enormously the boundaries of knowledge. Now when, laying aside as irrelevant to the purpose in hand the question of the truth or falsehood of religious beliefs, and the question of the wisdom or folly of religious practices, we examine side by side the religions of different races and ages, we find that, while they differ from each other in many particulars, the resemblances between them are numerous and fundamental, and that they mutually illustrate and explain each other, the distinctly stated faith and circumstantial ritual of one race often clearing up ambiguities in the faith and practice of other races. Thus the comparative study of religion soon forces on us the conclusion that the course of religious evolution has been, up to a certain point, very similar among all men, and that no one religion, at all events in its earlier stages, can be fully understood without a comparison of it with many others.

Regarded thus far, the comparative study of religion possesses a purely historical or antiquarian interest. It explains what the religious beliefs and practices of mankind have been and are, but it supplies no answer to the questions, Are these beliefs true? Are these practices wise? But though it cannot answer these questions directly, it often furnishes us indirectly with at least a probable

[1] This notice of Robertson Smith's work was written and published in 1894, soon after his lamented death.

answer to them; for it proves that many religious doctrines and practices are based on primitive conceptions which most civilized and educated men have long agreed in abandoning as mistaken. From this it is a natural and often a probable inference that doctrines so based are false, and that practices so based are foolish. It should be observed, however, that this inference, though natural and often probable, is never necessary and certain, because a belief may be true and a practice may be wise although the particular reasons assigned for holding the belief and observing the practice may be false. Multitudes of true beliefs and salutary customs have been and are daily defended by arguments which are absurd. The difference in this respect between a true and a false belief, and between a wise and a foolish practice, is merely that some good reason has been or may be found for the one, whereas no good reason has been or, so far as human foresight extends, is likely to be discovered for the other. Thus the proof that a belief is false or a practice foolish can never be complete or final, because it is always possible to allege that excellent reasons for it may exist which have hitherto eluded the scrutiny of our limited intelligence. The plea is quite irrefutable. But for all practical purposes we are perfectly justified in stigmatizing as false or foolish a belief or practice for which all the reasons hitherto adduced have proved, on a careful and dispassionate examination,

to be mistaken. Now the careful and dispassionate analysis to which the comparative study of religion subjects the religious beliefs and practices of mankind, leads inevitably to the conclusion that a great proportion of them are false and foolish, in the limited and provisional sense that no good reason has hitherto been adduced for any of them. And as the rules of conduct which have guided and still guide men in the affairs of life are to a large extent deduced from religious or theological premises, it follows that the comparative study of religion, in so far as it invalidates these premises, calls for a reconsideration of the speculative basis of ethics as well as of theology.

Thus a writer like Robertson Smith, whose genius and learning have greatly accelerated the progress of this study, especially in its application to the Semitic religions, is a force to be reckoned with in estimating the drift of thought in this generation. Both by training and by nature he was admirably equipped for the task which he accomplished. His wide and exact knowledge of Semitic literature and his travels in Semitic lands laid the solid foundation of his intimate familiarity with Semitic religion and life; and his friendship with the late J. F. McLennan, whose acquaintance he was fortunate enough to make during his student days at Edinburgh, early revealed to him the full importance of the comparative method as applied to the investigation of primitive society and religion.

The influence which McLennan, the founder of the comparative school of sociology in this country, exercised over Robertson Smith, was deep and lasting. It permeated his whole way of regarding the origins of society and religion, and may be traced in all his more important writings on these subjects, most conspicuously in his *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, which is in the main an application of McLennan's general principles to the particular field of early Arabian society. But Robertson Smith was anything but one of those writers who merely sort out facts under headings traced for them by others. The native force and originality of his mind were such that, to whatever study he might have devoted himself, he could hardly have failed of carrying it to a point farther than had been reached by his predecessors. If we seek to analyse the special qualities by virtue of which he did so much to advance the study of comparative religion, they seem to resolve themselves into great fertility of ideas and a vivid historical imagination, fed by a memory stored with a prodigious array of facts and kept under strict control by an unvarying soundness and sobriety of judgement. This coolness and sobriety of judgement, all the more remarkable in a man of his eager, fervid temperament, was one of the leading characteristics of his mind. He never lost touch of the real world, never allowed his imagination to stray into the realm of the vague and fanciful: all was clear, sharply defined, concrete.

Hence his criticism was always wholesome and bracing: it pruned away what was extravagant, and made distinct what had been dim. He brought all theories—his own and those of others—to the touchstone of fact. If any one in his presence hazarded a speculation which lost sight of the realities of life, he was instantly recalled to them by Robertson Smith. Hence, too, though his intellect was of the grand order, always busied with large questions of history, life, and nature, it always moved within the limits within which evidence is attainable and knowledge possible to man. He seemed to turn instinctively from matters that lie beyond the scope of human knowledge, from those problems insoluble to human reason which have exercised a morbid attraction on so many minds, and have been the theme of endless and heated, but always vain and fruitless, discussion through all the ages:

> Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy.

Thus with his concrete imagination and firm grasp of reality, Robertson Smith was eminently fitted to advance a study in which success largely depends on the student's power of picturing to himself how men have actually lived, thought, and acted in the past under all the complex conditions of real life. He saw that religion cannot properly be isolated from the other sides of human life, and treated as if it were independent of them; that the

nature and development of a people's religion are largely modified and determined by physical surroundings, material culture, manner of life, social and political organization, and relations with neighbouring peoples; that all these things act and react upon each other, and must all be allowed for, if we would understand any one side of the complex product. In primitive society, indeed, this fusion of the religious with the other elements of human life is far more complete than in advanced societies. For the religion of the savage does for him what philosophy and science essay to do for civilized man; it furnishes him with a general explanation of the processes of nature and his own being and destiny. Hence the life of the savage is saturated with it. By it he explains all events: on it he bases all his rules of conduct. He cannot separate it even in thought from the rest of his life: the distinction between religious and secular affairs, or between religion and morality, has no meaning for him. The progress of civilization tends to restrict the sphere of religion by substituting natural for supernatural agencies as the immediate causes of events, and natural for supernatural sanctions as the immediate basis of ethics. But the student of early thought and custom must remember that religion as an element of society, though it is slowly precipitated by civilization, is held in solution by savagery, colouring and being coloured by all the other elements with which it is blent. No one

was more keenly alive than Robertson Smith to this interpenetration of religion and other elements of primitive society. A fine instance of his habitual recognition of it is furnished by the comparison which he institutes between the evolution of religion in the East and in the West. He shows that at first, contrary to current notions, the Semitic and Greek religions ran on parallel lines, and that their subsequent wide divergence from each other was produced, not, as is commonly supposed, by any innate tendency to monotheism on the one side and to polytheism on the other, but by the different courses taken by the evolution of political institutions in the East and the West, society gravitating to monarchy in the East and to aristocracy and republicanism in the West, and the gods as usual being created in the likeness of their worshippers. The comparison is merely a sketch, but the lines are drawn with the hand of a master.

Unfortunately too much of Robertson Smith's work remains in the condition of sketches which he did not live to complete. With his keen sight and comprehensive glance he surveyed wide regions of religious history, mapped them out in the rough, and left others to fill in the details. To enumerate all the original contributions which he made to the comparative study of religion would be out of place here, even if it were practicable. Time and research are needed to test the value and to ascertain the full bearings of many of them. But readers

who happen to be unacquainted with his writings may fairly expect to be furnished with specimens of them. I will therefore mention two.

That mystical or sacramental sacrifices have played an important part in the history of many religions was first, I believe, pointed out by Robertson Smith. The peculiarity of these sacrifices is that in them the victim slain is an animal or a man whom the worshippers regard as divine, and of whose flesh and blood they sometimes partake, either actually or symbolically, as a solemn form of communion with the deity. The conception of such a sacrifice and the observance of such a communion are, of course, familiar to us in the Christian doctrine of the Atonement and the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist. But Robertson Smith was the first to show that conceptions and sacraments of this sort are not confined to Christianity, but are common to it with heathen and even savage religions. Whether he was right in tracing their origin to totemism may be questioned: the evidence thus far does not enable us to pronounce decisively. But that religious ideas and observances of this type are world-wide, and that they originated, not in an advanced, but in a low stage of society and in a very crude phase of thought, is not open to question. The discovery was Robertson Smith's, and it is of capital importance for the history of religion. Among the many questions which it raises, the one which will naturally interest

Christians most deeply is, How are we to explain the analogy which it reveals between the Christian Atonement and Eucharist on the one side, and the mystical or sacramental sacrifices of the heathen religions on the other? Robertson Smith's answer to this question was that the mystical sacrifices of the heathen foreshadowed in a dim and imperfect way the Christian conception of a divine Saviour who gives His life for the world. In his own words, "That the God-man dies for His people, and that His death is their life, is an idea which was in some degree foreshadowed by the oldest mystical sacrifices. It was foreshadowed, indeed, in a very crude and materialistic form, and without any of those ethical ideas which the Christian doctrine of the Atonement derives from a profounder sense of sin and divine justice. And yet the voluntary death of the divine victim, which we have seen to be a conception not foreign to ancient sacrificial ritual, contained the germ of the deepest thought in the Christian doctrine; the thought that the Redeemer gives Himself for His people, that 'for their sakes He consecrates Himself, that they also might be consecrated in truth.'"[1]

Another important province in the history of religion which Robertson Smith was the first to explore is the religion of pastoral tribes. The

[1] *Religion of the Semites* (Edinburgh, 1889), p. 393. This passage is omitted in the second and revised edition of the book published posthumously in 1894.

conclusions which he arrived at, mainly from an analysis of Semitic sacrificial ritual, are strikingly confirmed by an induction from the facts of pastoral life as observed among rude pastoral tribes in various parts of the world, especially in Africa. He showed that among pastoral tribes the herds are commonly regarded as sacred, and that their slaughter is permitted only under exceptional circumstances, the tribesmen generally subsisting on the milk and on game. Now, as he pointed out, this veneration of pastoral tribes for their cattle probably explains many features in the religion and mythology of the civilized peoples of antiquity, all of whom seem to have passed through the pastoral stage on their progress upward from the hunting to the agricultural stage. Thus, for example, it probably explains the sanctity of the cow in the Iranian and Brahminical religions, and the worship of the bull-god Apis, the cow-goddess Isis-Hathor, and the ram-god Ammon in ancient Egypt. In ancient Greece it explains the legend of the Golden Age in so far as that legend represented primitive man as vegetarian, the legend being a reminiscence of a time when cattle were sacred and were not eaten. And among the civilized nations of antiquity in general, and the Semites in particular, it explains why the chief associations of the great deities were with the milk-giving animals—the cow, the sheep, and the goat.

These are only specimens of Robertson Smith's far-reaching discoveries in the field of primitive

religion. His writings are storehouses of original and profound observations and fruitful suggestions. As such they will long be resorted to by students of religion, and it seems probable that much of the progress which, it is to be hoped, will be made in the study of religion in the immediate future, will consist in carrying out the lines of research which were indicated and initiated by him.

III

FISON AND HOWITT

ANTHROPOLOGY in general, and Australian anthropology in particular, has lately[1] suffered two very heavy losses by the deaths of the Rev. Lorimer Fison and Dr. A. W. Howitt, two old friends and colleagues, who passed away at an interval of a few months,—Mr. Fison dying in December 1907, and Dr. Howitt in March 1908. To their insight, enthusiasm, and industry we owe the first exact and comprehensive study of the social organization of the Australian tribes; and the facts which they brought to light, together with the explanations which they gave of them, have not only contributed to a better understanding of the Australian aborigines, but have shed much light on the early history of institutions in general, and especially of marriage.

Lorimer Fison was born on November ninth, 1832, in the picturesque village of Barningham in

[1] This notice was originally published in *Folk-Lore*, June 30th, 1909.

Suffolk.[1] His father was a prosperous landowner there till the repeal of the Corn Laws diminished the value of his property. With the help of a steward he farmed his own land and also some adjoining land, which belonged to Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. The father was a man of great integrity and nobility of character with a kind heart and a genial manner, all of which his son inherited from him to the full. As there was neither a great landowner in the neighbourhood nor a resident rector, Mr. Fison ruled supreme in the little village, using his power both wisely and kindly. A man of deep piety, he was a friend of the Quaker, Joseph John Gurney, after whom he named one of his two sons. His sympathies were with that old school of Quakers in Norwich and also with the early Wesleyans, but he brought up his family in the Evangelical school of the Church of England. There is a beautiful window to his memory in the old village church. His wife was a daughter of the Rev. John Reynolds, whose translations of Fénelon, Massillon, and Bourdaloue were well known in their day. Educated by her father, Mrs. Fison inherited from him his love of languages and his literary taste.

[1] For the facts of Mr. Fison's life I am indebted mainly to his sister, Mrs. Potts (14 Brookside, Cambridge), and his daughter, Miss Fison (Essendon, Victoria, Australia). In addition to her own reminiscences Mrs. Potts has kindly given me access to some of her brother's letters, from which I have extracted some of the facts mentioned in the text.

She assisted in her sons' education, preparing the Virgil lesson over night with the holiday tutor whom she had engaged for the boys, and striking out all passages which she did not wish them to read. To her Lorimer owed much of his fine character. She was something of a Roman mother, and believed that the strong instinct of hero-worship in human nature should be fostered in children from their earliest years. Accordingly, while her children were gathered round the board at their simple meals, she, sitting at the head of the table and looking stately and beautiful, would tell them stories of great men, who with heaven's help had worked for the good of mankind. The seed dropped on receptive soil and bore fruit, though perhaps not always of the sort which the worthy lady desired; for Lorimer and his brother Joseph fought over their favourite heroes even in the nursery. The books she gave them to read were mostly the old English classics expurgated by her father's careful pen. *The Faerie Queen* was a living reality to the boys, and Lorimer personated its heroes with dauntless bravery. On the other hand, the virtuous hero of *The Pilgrim's Progress* was less to his taste; indeed it is to be feared that he found the foul fiend Apollyon the most attractive character in that edifying work; for, fired with emulation, he would "straddle quite over the whole breadth of the way," so far as least as his little legs allowed him to do so, and for lack of a

flaming dart to hurl at Christian he would snatch a large gravy spoon from the nursery table and roar out in a terrible voice, " Here will I spill thy soul." When a righteous retribution overtook the counterfeit Apollyon for this or other escapades, his small brother and sister would stand one on either side of the sufferer and exhort him to fortitude, saying, " Be a Spartan, Lorry, be a Spartan ! " And a Spartan, agreeably blent with the character of Apollyon, Lorry proved to be, for not a muscle of his little white face would twitch till the punishment was over. In the intervals between these heroic deeds and sufferings Lorry scoured the country round. There was not a stack of corn nor a tall tree in the neighbourhood on the top of which he had not perched ; not a pond into which he had not waded to explore its living inhabitants. The old groom was kind to the children; but the steward frowned when Lorry and his young sister would gallop past with a clatter of hoofs at daybreak, mounted on forbidden horses, to ride five miles to the nearest post town for the joy of placing the post-bag before their father at breakfast.

In time these youthful delights came to an end. Lorimer and Joseph were sent to school at Sheffield, where they had the benefit of an able staff of Cambridge masters. After leaving school Lorimer read for a year in Cambridge with Mr. Potts of Trinity College, whose edition of Euclid is well known. He entered the University in 1855,

being enrolled as a student of Gonville and Caius College. But the spirit of adventure was too strong in him to brook the tame routine of a student's life, and after keeping only two terms, the Michaelmas term of 1855 and the Lent term of 1856, he left the University without taking a degree, and sailed for Australia to dig for gold. He was at the diggings when the news of his father's death reached him unexpectedly. It affected him deeply. In his distress he was taken to a mission meeting held in the open air, and there, under the double impression of sorrow and of the solemn words he heard, he fell to the ground and underwent one of those sudden conversions of which we read in religious history. Accordingly he left the gold-diggings in or about 1861, and repaired to the University of Melbourne, where the terms which he had kept at Cambridge were allowed to count, though even then he did not proceed to a degree. At Melbourne he joined the Wesleyan communion, and, hearing that missionaries were wanted in Fiji, he offered himself for the service. The offer was accepted; he was ordained a minister, and sailed for Fiji in 1863. He had previously married a lady of the Wesleyan Church, who survives him, together with a family of two sons and four daughters.

Mr. Fison laboured as a missionary in Fiji from 1863 to 1871, and again from 1875 to 1884. During the first of these periods he was appointed

to the mission stations of Viwa, Lakemba, and Rewa ; his name and that of his devoted wife are still household words there. Afterwards he acted as Principal of the Training Institution for natives in Navuloa, and his lectures were highly esteemed and treasured in memory by his students long after he had left Fiji. His frank, manly, cheery nature, ready sympathy, quick intelligence, and sound common-sense won him the love and confidence of natives and Europeans alike. Governors such as Sir William MacGregor and Sir J. B. Thurston treated him as a friend : Government officials in every department of the service regarded him as a safe and trustworthy guide in all matters affecting the relations of the Government with the natives ; and merchants and planters, some of whom at the outset had not been very friendly to the mission, greeted him affectionately and welcomed him to their homes, when his big burly form appeared in Levuka ; for he was a man of genial manners and a ready wit, sometimes flavoured with a touch of sarcasm. The natives loved him because they knew that he loved them; and, while he faithfully reproved them for their faults, he was lenient to all mistakes which sprang from ignorance or errors of judgement. A few kindly words, blent with a judicious touch of ridicule and an appeal to common-sense, were often more effectual than a stern reproof or the rigid exercise of Church discipline would have been. This account of

Mr. Fison's missionary work in Fiji I have borrowed mainly from an obituary notice by his old and intimate friend, the experienced South Sea missionary, Dr. George Brown, who says of him:

"Dr. Fison and I were close friends for many years, and during those years I had the privilege of sharing in his joys and of knowing more of his trials and difficulties perhaps than any other man. He never 'wore his heart upon his sleeve,' and so his life often appeared to others to be easier and more free from trouble than it really was. He always kept a brave face to the world, and many even of his intimate friends never knew how hard a battle he had sometimes to fight. . . . I knew him in the Mission field, and on board ship, in his home at Essendon, about which I cannot trust myself to write, and in my own home. I have met him in counsel, and in our own Conferences; have shared his joys and have been the confidant of his troubles and sorrows, and I always found him to be a devoted Christian, a man with a child-like heart in his relationship to God, a wise counsellor, a true and loyal friend, and one of the best missionaries whom God has ever given to our church."[1]

Among the features in Mr. Fison's character which commanded the respect of all who knew him were his transparent honesty, his readiness to

[1] "Lorimer Fison," by the Rev. George Brown, D.D., *Australasian Methodist Missionary Review*, Sydney, February 4, 1908, pp. 1, 3.

acknowledge, indeed to proclaim on the housetops, any mistake which he had made, and, moreover, his absolute disinterestedness. When he lived as a missionary in Fiji he was repeatedly offered land by the natives, and he might easily have made large profits by accepting their offers and selling the land again to settlers. But he steadily refused to enrich himself by means which he regarded as injurious to the natives and inconsistent with his sacred profession. Once, as he was walking with a chief on the shore, the chief pressed him to accept land. Mr. Fison stopped, measured six feet or perhaps a little more (for he was a tall man) on the sand, and said : " If I die in Fiji, you may give me so much land. I will not take more." [1] So he lived and died poor, but honoured.

Mr. Fison's intimate acquaintance with Fijian custom was of public service. When the Lands Commission was about to sit, he delivered a lecture at Levuka on the native system of land tenure in Fiji. The substance of it was published in *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute*,[2] and soon after by the British Government in a Blue Book. It was also translated into German, and published in one of the German official books at the time

[1] Mr. Fison's opinion and practice in this matter were shared by the great majority of his fellow-missionaries in Fiji. Only three out of forty-three bought land. See *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. x. (1881) p. 352 note*.

[2] " Land Tenure in Fiji," *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. x. (1881) pp. 332-352.

when the claims of German landowners in Fiji were under consideration. Many years later the Governor of Fiji, then Sir Henry M. Jackson, K.C.M.G., esteemed the treatise so highly that he caused it to be reprinted from Mr. Fison's manuscript in a fuller form at the Government Press; and in a despatch of July thirty-first, 1903, Mr. Chamberlain, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, wrote to the Governor: "I have read this valuable treatise with much interest. I entirely approve of your action in causing it to be reprinted by the Government Press, and I consider that the colony owes Dr. Fison a debt of gratitude for his kindness in recopying the original manuscript."

When the distinguished American ethnologist, Lewis H. Morgan, was collecting materials for his great work, *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family*, he circulated a paper of questions very widely, and through the agency of Professor Goldwin Smith one of these papers reached Mr. Fison in Fiji. In answer to the questions he contributed a full and accurate account of the Fijian and Tongan systems of consanguinity and affinity to Morgan's famous book. The value and importance of this contribution were fully acknowledged by Morgan.[1] It speaks highly for Mr.

[1] L. H. Morgan, *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family*, p. 568 (*Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge*, vol. xvii., Washington, 1871).

Fison's scientific insight that he clearly perceived the far-reaching scope of Morgan's inquiries, and that accordingly, on his return to New South Wales in 1871, he set himself to investigate the systems of marriage and relationship of the Australian aborigines. In order to procure information on the subject he wrote to the chief Australian papers, inviting the co-operation of those who knew the natives. Some of his letters were published in *The Australasian*, and attracted the attention of Mr. A. W. Howitt, whose explorations both in Central and in South-Eastern Australia had brought him into close contact with the aborigines. Hence the two men met and formed a deep and loyal friendship, which only ended with their lives. They now entered jointly into a comprehensive investigation of the social organization of the Australian tribes, prosecuting their inquiries as far as possible through personal intercourse with the natives, but also partly by correspondence ; for they printed and circulated widely through the principal Australian settlements a list of questions touching the tribal organization and systems of consanguinity and affinity of the aborigines. Thus they accumulated a large body of facts illustrating many phases of savage life, and exhibiting some of the fundamental institutions of the Australian tribes. The results of these inquiries, carried on for some years, were published jointly by the two friends in their well-known work

Kamilaroi and Kurnai (Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, and Brisbane, 1880), so named after the two tribes, one in New South Wales, the other in Victoria, to which the authors had paid special attention. This important work, for which Lewis H. Morgan wrote an appreciative preface,[1] unquestionably laid the foundations of a scientific knowledge of the Australian aborigines, and its value in setting forth the wonderful social system, seemingly complex, confused, and casual, yet really clear, logical, and purposeful, of these savages, can hardly be overestimated. Viewed both in itself and in the light of the subsequent researches to which it gave birth, especially those of Spencer and Gillen in Central Australia, *Kamilaroi and Kurnai* is a document of primary importance in the archives of anthropology.

Not that all its theories have stood the test of time. Mr. Fison himself, with admirable candour, announced publicly from his presidential chair at a meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, that an elaborate theory which he had propounded in that book was "not worth a rush." As the words in which he did so are not only highly characteristic of the man, but contain a warning of permanent importance to

[1] Mr. Fison had previously contributed information to L. H. Morgan's last book, *Ancient Society* (London, 1877), pp. 51, 403, etc. From one of Morgan's references to him (*op. cit.* p. 403, note 1) it appears that Mr. Fison had been at one time resident at Sydney.

anthropologists, especially to those of them who study savages at a safe distance, and have never perhaps seen one of them in their lives, though they may possibly have watched their images dancing silently in a cinematograph or heard the echo of their voices chanting and whooping out of a phonograph, I will quote the passage entire for their benefit. Mr. Fison said: "In these investigations two things mainly are required—first, a patient continuance in the collecting of facts; and, secondly, the faculty of seeing in them what is seen by the natives themselves. We must ever remember that our mind-world is very different from theirs. It is not filled with the same images; it is not governed by the same laws. It is to theirs as the England of the present day is to the England of who shall say how many ages ago? The climate, the coast-line, the watersheds, the flora, the fauna—in short, nearly all the aspects of nature—are changed. It is to all intents and purposes another land. As to the former of these two requisites, one's natural tendency, especially in the beginning of the work, is to form a theory as soon as one has got hold of a fact; and, as to the latter, we are too apt to look at the facts in savagery from the mental standpoint of the civilised man. Both of these are extremely mischievous. They lead investigators into fatal mistakes, and bring upon them much painful experience; for the pang attending the extraction of an aching

double tooth is sweetest bliss when compared with the tearing up by the roots of a cherished theory. I speak feelingly here, because I can hold myself up as an awful warning against theory-making. To take one instance only. In *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, the joint work of Mr. A. W. Howitt and myself, there is a long chapter containing a most beautiful theory of the Kurnai system, which I worked out with infinite pains. It accounts for that system so completely and so satisfactorily that the Kurnai ought to be ashamed of themselves for having been perverse enough to arrive at their system by a different road, which further inquiry showed us most conclusively that they did. Students of anthropology who have read our work, and who still survive, will please accept this intimation that the theory aforesaid is not worth a rush." [1]

It is to be hoped that this warning will be laid to heart by all who view savages through a telescope, whether from a club or a college window. If our glass be a good one and we apply our eye to the end of it steadily, undistracted by the sights and sounds about us, we shall see and hear strange things,

[1] *Report of the Fourth Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, held at Hobart, Tasmania, in January*, 1892, Section G. Anthropology, *Address by the President*, the Rev. Lorimer Fison, M.A., Queen's College, University of Melbourne, pp. 150 *sq.* With reference to *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, Mr. Fison adds in a note that "it is only bare justice to Mr. Howitt to note that nearly all the labour of collecting the Australian facts fell to his share, and that he did this work after the manner in which he does all other work undertaken by him. No higher praise could possibly be expressed."

things very unlike those which may be seen and heard either in Pall Mall and Piccadilly or in the grassy courts and echoing cloisters of an ancient university town. We shall not see the rush of cabs, omnibuses, and motors, nor be stunned by their long continuous roar ; we shall not see the ivy-mantled walls lapped by the sluggish stream, the old gardens dreaming in the moonlight of the generations that are gone ; we shall not hear the drowsy murmur of fountains plashing in summer days or the tinkle of the chapel bell calling to prayer, when the shadows lengthen across the greensward and in the west the stars begin to sparkle above the fading gold of evening. If we are really intent on knowing the truth, we must strive to dismiss or disregard these nearer, these familiar sights and sounds, whether harsh and ugly or beautiful and sweet, and to fix our thoughts on the strange and distant scene ; and thus by long and patient effort we may come to see in the magic mirror of the mind a true reflection of a life which differs immeasurably from our own. Yet this reflection or picture must itself be pieced together by the imagination ; for imagination, the power of inward vision, is as necessary to science as to poetry, whether our aim is to understand our fellow-men, to unravel the tangled skein of matter, or to explore the starry depths of space. Only we must remember that, if imagination is a necessary, it is not a perfect or infallible instrument of science :

it is apt to take its colours from the eye that uses it, to tremble with every vibration that pulses along the nerves of the observer. These things cannot but trouble and distort the images which print themselves on our brain ; yet they are inevitable, since we cannot get outside of ourselves and contemplate the world from the standpoint of a purely abstract intelligence. All we can do is to make allowance as far as possible for our individual upbringing, character, and surroundings, to calculate as exactly as we can the personal equation, and to correct our impressions accordingly. If we have done this, and if we are, like Mr. Fison, always ready to pull to pieces the old mental image, at whatever cost, and to build it up again on better evidence, then we have done all that is humanly possible to attain to the truth. When all is done, we may still be in error, but the error will be pardonable.

While Mr. Fison was pursuing his inquiries among the Australian tribes from 1871 to 1875, he was also engaged in ministerial work in New South Wales and Victoria. Returning to Fiji in 1875,[1] he resumed his observations of native

[1] When Mr. Fison left Australia in 1875 to return to Fiji, the Wesleyan Conference of Australia passed unanimously the following resolution : " In view of the Rev. L. Fison's receiving an appointment in Fiji from the Missionary Committee, this Conference takes the present opportunity of expressing its regret that his state of health is depriving the colonial work of so valuable a minister and pastor. It assures him of its confidence and affection, and of its admiration of his exposure and denunciation of the so-called Labour Traffic in the South Sea Islands, and it commends him and his family to the care of Almighty God."

Fijian life, and contributed to *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* a series of valuable papers dealing with burial customs, land tenure, riddles, rites of initiation, and the classificatory system of relationship.[1] Many years afterwards Mr. Fison published a volume of Fijian stories with an introduction and notes illustrating some aspects of the native life and manners.[2]

From Fiji Mr. Fison returned to Victoria in 1884. Next year he resumed his ministerial duties, and continued to discharge them until 1888, when ill-health obliged him finally to resign them. In the same year (1888) he built, partly with borrowed capital, a house at Essendon, near Melbourne, where he resided with his wife and four unmarried daughters to the end of his life. The house was built for a school, and his daughters, accomplished and industrious ladies, taught pupils in it until new rules adopted by the State of Victoria rendered the house, in which Mr. Fison had sunk some of his small savings, unsuitable for the purpose. Meantime Mr. Fison laboured hard at journalism. From 1888 to within about three years of his death he edited *The Spectator*, a Melbourne paper published in connexion with the Wesleyan Church.

[1] "Notes on Fijian Burial Customs," *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute, etc.* vol. x. (1881) pp. 137-149; "Land Tenure in Fiji, *ibid.* pp. 332-352; "On Fijian Riddles," *ibid.* vol. xi. (1882) pp. 406-410; "The Nanga, or Sacred Stone Enclosure, of Wainimala, Fiji," *ibid.* vol. xiv. (1885) pp. 14-31; "The Classificatory System of Relationship," *ibid.* vol. xxiv. (1895) pp. 360-371.

[2] *Tales from Old Fiji*, London, 1904.

To a weekly paper, *The Australasian*, he contributed a series of articles on "The Testimony of Fijian Words," the substance of some of which he appears to have afterwards embodied in the introduction to his *Tales from Old Fiji*. He was one of the first Fellows of Queen's College in the University of Melbourne, and for some years he acted as Secretary to the College Council. Indeed, he had been instrumental with others in founding the College. From an American university he received an honorary degree of Master of Arts in recognition of his services to anthropology.[1] In January 1892, he presided over the Anthropological Section of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science at Hobart Town in Tasmania, and greatly enjoyed the fortnight's rest and the hospitalities he met with from the Governor, Sir Arthur Havelock (whom he had known in Fiji), the members of the Tasmanian Club, and others. It was the first holiday he had had for more than seven years, and even this he was only enabled to take through the liberality of a friend. Another pleasant break in his laborious life came in 1894, when he visited England once more, and attended the meeting of the British Association at Oxford as one of the representatives of Australian science. At the meeting he read a paper on the classificatory system

[1] This is mentioned by Mr. Fison in a letter written from Oxford, 18th October 1894. He does not mention the name of the university which bestowed on him this well-earned honour.

of relationship, and made the acquaintance of a number of eminent men, including Max Müller and Professor E. B. Tylor. During this his last visit to England, Mr. Fison went to Chichester to see his good friend the Rev. Dr. R. H. Codrington, formerly a missionary of the Church of England to Melanesia, and one of the highest authorities on the language and customs of the Melanesians. He also came to Cambridge for a few days, when I had the privilege of making his personal acquaintance. His frank, manly, genial nature won me at once, and we were friends to the end of his honoured and useful life. He wrote me many letters in the clear, crisp, graphic style which made all his letters a pleasure to read.

Returning to Australia he settled down again to the routine of journalism at his desk. How hard he worked to support his family may be partially gathered from one of those charming letters which down to the last he wrote to the sister who shared the dear memories of the happy youthful days at Barningham in Suffolk. In the same letter in which he tells his sister of the commendation bestowed by Mr. Chamberlain upon his treatise on the Fijian land system,[1] Mr. Fison writes thus: "There is no particular news; and even if there were, I have no time to tell it. I never was so hard wrought in my life as I have been of late. Sluicing on the diggings was hard enough, for you

[1] See above, p. 218.

had to keep the sluice boxes full while the water was running; but it was over for the day when sundown came. My present work has no sundown." When Mr. Fison wrote thus he had nearly completed his seventy-first year. Not long afterwards his health, which under the pressure of hard work and domestic anxieties had been failing for some time, broke down completely. An affection of the heart necessitated absolute repose, and for the few remaining years of his life Mr. Fison was in body, though never in mind or spirit, a shattered invalid. Happily the country whom he had served so well and so loyally did not forget him in his poverty and old age. In the spring of 1905, at Mr. Balfour's recommendation, His Majesty the King was graciously pleased to recognize Mr. Fison's services to his country and to science by granting him a pension of £150 a year. So there was light at the evening-tide of a long and strenuous day.[1]

Though he could no longer work at the things he loved most, his interest in them never flagged to the end, and I still received from time to time letters written in his now tremulous hand, which

[1] Perhaps without a breach of confidence I may be allowed to quote a fragment of one of Mr. Fison's letters which has been placed in my hands by his sister: ". . . looking than she was in her youth. She has been a good wife to me, and I thank God for her every day of my life. If we only had a small competence, we should toddle down the rest of the decline hand in hand with gladsome hearts." The beginning of the first sentence is lost; it seems to have referred to "a beautiful dream."

proved that the keen intelligence was not blunted nor the warm heart grown cold. There was even an apparent slight recovery in his health. About a week before his death he and his beloved wife, herself an invalid for many years, were well enough to leave the house and attend a public gathering, where friends crowded round them and congratulated them on their appearing once more in their midst. But it was the last flicker of the expiring taper. Perhaps the excitement, combined with the great heat of the weather, for it was now the height of the torrid Australian summer, proved too much for his strength. He was taken suddenly ill, and lingered between life and death for some days, surrounded by his family and remaining conscious and calm. Sundown, the sundown for which in the gathering shadows he had longed, came at last on Sunday, December the twenty-ninth, 1907, when the labourer entered into his eternal rest.

Alfred William Howitt was born at Nottingham in England in 1830.[1] His parents were William

[1] For most of the facts in the following sketch of Dr. Howitt's life I am indebted to an obituary notice of him by his friend and disciple, Professor W. Baldwin Spencer, which appeared in *The Victorian Naturalist*, vol. xxiv. No. 12, April 1908. I have also made some use of an obituary notice published in the Australian paper, *The Argus*, Monday, March 9, 1908, p. 7. My notice of Dr. Howitt's explorations in Central Australia is taken mainly from his own reminiscences, as these have been graphically recorded by him in the address which he delivered as President of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science at Adelaide in 1907. The account of his last illness and death is derived from letters written to me by his daughter, Miss Mary E. B. Howitt.

and Mary Howitt, the well-known and popular writers. The father, a native of the delightful little village of Heanor in Derbyshire, engaged in the business of an apothecary at Nottingham, but finally devoted himself to literature, pouring out a long series of volumes. Soon after his marriage Mr. Howitt and his wife made a tour on foot to Scotland, a rare, almost unprecedented, undertaking in those days. In 1840, when Alfred was ten years old, the parents went to Heidelberg for the education of their children, and remained about two years in Germany. Afterwards Alfred studied at University College, London. In June 1852, Mr. Howitt, accompanied by his two sons, Alfred and Charlton, sailed for Australia, ostensibly to visit his brother, Dr. Godfrey Howitt, then settled as a medical man in Melbourne, but perhaps also to see for themselves the new Land of Gold and to partake of its fabulous riches. They reached Melbourne after a three months' voyage, and purchasing a cart and horses journeyed up-country to the Ovens gold diggings. After about two years of toilsome digging and wandering in what was then a wild country, William Howitt, with his son Charlton, returned to England in 1854, leaving his other son, Alfred, then twenty-four years of age, behind him at Melbourne. Young Howitt was now not merely an accomplished bushman, but had begun to turn his keen powers of observation to higher account by studying nature. At first he farmed land at

Caulfield, near Melbourne, which belonged to his uncle, Dr. Godfrey Howitt. But the humdrum life of a farmer was not to his taste, and he betook himself to the more adventurous pursuit of cattle-driving. On one of the journeys which he made to the Murray River for the purpose of bringing down herds of cattle to Melbourne, he chanced to fall in with Lorimer Fison. They met and parted, little thinking how closely associated they were to be in after life.

This was the great era of exploration in Australia. The vast unknown regions of the continent stirred the imagination and raised the hopes of the colonists. Explorer after explorer set out and vanished into the far interior, some of them to return no more. Young Howitt bore his share in these arduous enterprises. It chanced that the explorer Warburton had visited the dreary region of Central Australia about Lake Eyre in an unusually fine season, when water and grass abounded, and accordingly he reported on it in glowing terms. His discoveries excited great interest in Victoria : a committee was formed in Melbourne to open up the country ; and in September 1859 Mr. Howitt, now well known as an able, careful, and fearless bushman, was sent from Adelaide at the head of a small party to spy out what, seen at a distance, appeared to the longing eyes of Australian shepherds and herdsmen a land flowing, or rather about to flow, with milk and honey. The result of Howitt's

expedition was to dispel this pastoral dream. He looked for a Paradise, and found a desert. Coming from the forest-clad and snow-capped mountains of Victoria, with their abundant rains and luxuriant vegetation, he found himself in another world. In the distance barren ranges of naked brown rocks and precipices loomed weirdly through the desert haze ; and a nearer approach revealed the profound ravines by which these desolate mountains were cleft from side to side. At their feet stretched either wastes of sand, across which wind-driven columns of dust stalked like the jinn of *The Arabian Nights*, or plains so stony that riding at night the explorers could follow their leader by the sparks of fire which his horse's hoofs struck out of the stones at every step in the darkness. By day the atmosphere was at times so clear that the travellers could hardly tell whether objects seen through it were near or far ; at other times the mirage worked such fantastic effects on the landscape that they felt as if transported to an enchanted land. "It was an interesting experience in a wonderful country," says Dr. Howitt dryly, in conclusion, "but it was not the kind of country that was wanted." [1]

After his return from this exploring expedition, Mr. Howitt took a post as manager of the Mount Napier cattle station, near Hamilton. But in

[1] *Report of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science*, Adelaide, 1907, *Inaugural Address by A. W. Howitt, C.M.G., D.Sc., F.G.S., President*, pp. 9-11 (separate reprint).

1860 he was again despatched by the Victorian Government on the task of exploration. This time he went with a party of picked miners to prospect for gold in the rugged, mountainous, trackless, and then almost unknown region of Gippsland, in South-eastern Victoria, where in winter the snow lies for months on the peaks and tablelands, and where in the dense jungle of the valleys the trees grow to heights scarcely equalled on earth. The mission was successful; goldfields were opened on the Crooked, Dargo, and Wentworth Rivers. It was during this expedition that Mr. Howitt first became keenly interested in the eucalyptus trees, to which in after life he paid much attention, acquiring an intimate knowledge of the subject both from the practical and the scientific point of view.

In the year 1860 an ill-fated expedition, equipped at lavish cost and led by Burke and Wills, had started from Melbourne amid the enthusiasm of the citizens to traverse Australia from south to north. When month after month passed and no word came of the explorers, great uneasiness was felt in Victoria, and on June eighteenth, 1861, it was decided to send out a search party to their relief. Of this party Mr. Howitt was appointed leader. He started on July fourteenth, and journeyed north to Menindie on the Darling River, then the last outpost of civilization, if indeed civilization can be said to be represented by a public-house, a shop, a lock-up, and a knot of bearded men in cabbage-tree hats, who, so far as

they did not pass their leisure hours in the contemplative seclusion of the lock-up, devoted them to smoking and lounging in the public-house, discussing the latest "brush with the niggers," and criticizing the stores offered for the use of explorers, particularly the dried beef, which they smelt and tasted with the air of connoisseurs. Leaving these representatives of the higher culture behind, Mr. Howitt and his small party, with their horses and camels, struck westward into the desert. He has described his experiences briefly but graphically.[1] He tells us how, when they came to a river or a creek, the camels stubbornly refused to take to the water, but were circumvented by human intelligence; for, having persuaded them to sit down on the bank and then to get up again, Mr. Howitt and his companions suddenly precipitated themselves upon the brutes in an unguarded moment when they were off their balance in the act of rising, and so toppled them bodily into the stream, and hauled them across. After floundering through the water, the camels waded in the deep mud on the other side, drawing their hoofs out of it one after the other with a loud plop like the sound of drawing a gigantic cork out of a Brobdingnagian bottle. Day after day, over ground paved with sharp splinters of flinty stone, through deep dry gorges in the deso-

[1] In his *Inaugural Address* to the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, Adelaide, 1907, pp. 20 *et seq.* (separate reprint).

late hills, lined with half-dead mulga scrub and studded with great boulders, the explorers and their beasts slowly picked their way, footsore and weary under the burning sun, till coming out on the edge of a bluff they suddenly beheld the great sandy desert of the Cooper's Creek country spread out below and beyond them. Far as the eye could see the sand-hills stretched away, ridge beyond ridge, to the horizon, until their outlines were lost in the haze of distance. As he gazed on this dreary landscape from the height, a very different scene, which he had beheld a year before in the Gippsland highlands, rose up before the mind of the explorer. Then, as he ascended a mountain summit on the Dargo River, a wonderful far-reaching prospect had burst upon him. For many miles the snowy plains stretched northwards to where, on the horizon, the chain of the Bogong Mountains rose, lustrous in their white mantle of snow, resplendently pure under the cloudless deep blue of the winter sky in the Australian Alps.

Descending from these heights, Mr. Howitt and his men pursued their way, now with labour and difficulty over the most stony wilderness imaginable, now with comparative ease over sandhills or earthy plains, cracked and fissured for want of water in all directions, sometimes bare and brown, sometimes cumbered with the dry stalks of withered plants, which rose higher than a horse and showed how, after heavy rains, the face of these arid deserts

would change as by magic into a teeming jungle of vegetation. Thus they journeyed till one day, riding alone, Mr. Howitt perceived some native huts on the farther side of a dry waddy, and in the foreground a black man and woman gathering sticks. The woman at once made off towards the huts, but the man stood his ground and gesticulated in great excitement to Mr. Howitt, until on the approach of the traveller he also took to his heels. To regain his party Mr. Howitt rode along the bank of the waddy, and met his native riders, one of whom shouted to him : " Find em whitefella ; two fella dead boy and one fella livo." Hastening to the native camp, Mr. Howitt found the last survivor of the missing explorers, John King, sitting in one of the huts. He was a melancholy object, hardly to be distinguished as a civilized man by the tatters that still hung on his weak, emaciated frame. At first he was too much overcome by emotion to speak distinctly ; but in time he recovered sufficiently to tell his tale of suffering and disaster. It was the twenty-fifth of September when the rescuers and the rescued turned their faces homeward ; on November twenty-eighth, 1861, they all reached Melbourne in safety.

A few days later the intrepid and indefatigable explorer started again for the deserts of the far interior to explore the region of Cooper's Creek and to bring back the bones of the men who had fallen martyrs to science, that they might be buried

with public honours in the city. This task also Mr. Howitt accomplished successfully. He brought back the remains of Burke and Wills to Melbourne on December twenty-eighth, 1862. For these services Mr. Howitt was appointed Police Magistrate and Warden of the Goldfields in Gippsland, a post which he filled with conspicuous success during twenty-six years of incessant work from 1863 to 1889.

It was during the expedition of 1862, when he was no longer under the necessity of pushing on from day to day lest he should come too late to rescue the survivors, that Mr. Howitt found leisure to study the natives with whom he came into contact ; and it was then that he gained his first insight into the social organization of the Dieri tribe, who roamed the wilderness of Cooper's Creek and Lake Eyre. With the help of a native interpreter of the Narrinyeri tribe Mr. Howitt before long was able to make himself understood sufficiently for ordinary purposes. On this expedition also he saw for himself the wonderful transformation which after heavy rain converts the Central Australian desert into a jungle. Where an earlier explorer had beheld nothing but a dark brown wilderness without a blade of grass, Mr. Howitt rode for many days through a land of lakes, lagoons, and water-channels, with wide stretches of plains covered by a rank growth of tall plants, higher than a man on horseback, looking like vast beds

of white hollyhocks in full bloom, and his horses revelled in the luxuriant herbage. So sharp was the line of demarcation between the dry and the watered land that on a steep bank, at the point to which the flood had risen, the traveller stood with the hind feet of his horse in the desert and his front feet on the teeming vegetation.

The district of Gippsland which was committed to Mr. Howitt's care extended from Wilson's Promontory to Cape Howe. It was then a wild, almost unexplored country, and every year Mr. Howitt travelled thousands of miles through it on horseback ; and as he rode among the mountains and through the great forests he learned to study minutely both the rocks and the trees. His capacity for work was extraordinary ; much of his reading was done in the saddle. The botanical and geological observations which he made on these journeys bore fruit in a series of memoirs which he contributed to the publications of his official Department, the Royal Society of Victoria, the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, and occasionally to the *Quarterly Journal of Geological Science*. Among these memoirs may be particularly mentioned his treatise, "The Eucalypti of Gippsland," which appeared in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Victoria* for 1889.

Still more important for his life-work was the acquaintance which on these journeys he made

with the native inhabitants, the Kurnai of Gippsland. He gained their confidence, and, being regarded by them as a fully initiated member of the tribe, was able to acquire an intimate knowledge of their old customs and beliefs before they had wholly passed into oblivion ; for, though the Kurnai had long been at peace with the whites, they were even then fast dying out. Thus, when on his return from Fiji in 1871 Mr. Fison appealed through the newspapers for information on the Australian aborigines, Mr. Howitt was well qualified by his knowledge both of the Central and of the South-eastern tribes, the Dieri as well as the Kurnai, to respond to the appeal. He did so, and, as we have seen, the two men became fast friends and colleagues in the work of investigation, laying together the foundations of Australian ethnology. In these researches the observation and collection of facts fell mainly to the share of Mr. Howitt, his colleague's professional duties and situation leaving him fewer opportunities of personal contact with the natives. On the other hand, the theoretical interpretation of the facts was at first largely the work of Mr. Fison, though in later years Mr. Howitt distinguished himself certainly not less in this department of anthropology. After the two friends had published in *Kamilaroi and Kurnai* the joint results of their inquiries and reflections, Mr. Howitt pursued his investigations for the most part alone ; indeed, even before

the publication of that book, Mr. Fison had returned to Fiji. Some of the results of these investigations were given to the world in a long series of valuable memoirs on the Australian tribes, which appeared for the most part in *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* from the year 1883 to the year 1907. They opened with a joint paper by Messrs. Fison and Howitt, called "From Mother-Right to Father-Right," and they closed with one by Dr. Howitt on "Australian Group-Relationships." In this series an early one, entitled "Notes on the Australian Class Systems," read in the author's absence before the Anthropological Institute in London on December twelfth, 1882,[1] is second to none in importance for its clear enunciation of the principles underlying the seemingly complex marriage system of the Australian aborigines.

Strangely enough, when many years later he came to write his great work *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, Dr. Howitt had forgotten his own enunciation of these important principles; for it was only after a conversation with me at my house in Cambridge, in the summer of 1904, that he inserted a statement of them in his book, which was then going through the press. With characteristic candour he accepted the principles as true and assigned the discovery of them to me.[2] It

[1] *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute, etc.* vol. xii. (1883) pp. 496-510.

[2] *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, pp. 284-286.

was not till January second, 1908, that I detected our joint mistake; for on that day, reading again Dr. Howitt's old paper, "Notes on the Australian Class Systems," I found that in it he had clearly and concisely stated the principles in question many years before I had even given a thought to the subject. As I had certainly studied and cited that paper [1] long before, I make no doubt that I had learned the principles from it, though like the author of the paper I had forgotten the source of my information. I at once wrote to Dr. Howitt to do him the justice which he had failed to do himself.[2] Though I did not know it, there was no time to be lost, for when I was writing he had already been struck down by mortal sickness. Happily my letter reached him in life, and he sent me through his daughter a last message, a kind and generous message, in reply.

Another paper which deserves to be specially mentioned is a later one, entitled "Further Notes on the Australian Class Systems," [3] in which Mr. Howitt acutely pointed out how among the Australian savages a certain social advance has been made in the better watered and more fertile

[1] In my *Totemism*, published in 1887.

[2] At the same time I wrote to the same effect a letter to *Man*, and my letter was published in that journal, February 1908, pp. 21 *sq.* I believe I wrote at the same time an identical letter to *The Athenæum*, but on a cursory search through a file of that periodical I have not been able to find the letter.

[3] *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute, etc.* vol. xviii. (1889) pp. 31-70.

districts, particularly on the coast, while the more archaic forms of society linger in the dry and desert interior, from which he inferred that in Australia the first steps towards civilization have been conditioned by a heavier rainfall and a consequent greater abundance of food. This important principle was afterwards fully recognized and clearly stated by him in *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*. Indeed he justly attached so much weight to it that he wished to illustrate it in his book by a map of the rainfall in Australia, which would show how in that continent progress in culture varies directly with the rainfall. For that purpose he applied to the meteorological authorities in London, but for lack of the necessary data, if I remember aright, the project was abandoned. Amongst his anthropological papers published elsewhere may be mentioned his paper, "Australian Group-Relationships," published in the *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution* for 1883; another "On the Organisation of Australian Tribes," in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Victoria* for 1889; and some papers published in *Folk-Lore* for the years 1906 and 1907.

In 1889 Mr. Howitt became Secretary for Mines in Victoria, and in 1896 he was appointed Audit Commissioner. Besides these public duties he sat on other Government commissions and boards of inquiry, for which his wide experience, ripe knowledge, and sound judgement pre-eminently

fitted him. Yet we cannot but regret that he devoted so much time and energy to business, which others perhaps might have performed as efficiently, to the neglect of scientific researches, for which few were so well qualified as he. However, he continued to give his leisure hours to study, and looked forward to the time when he should be able to dedicate the rest of his life, without distraction, to his favourite pursuits. The longed-for time came, or seemed to come, at last when he retired from the public service of Victoria in 1901. His retirement was unnoticed by the public and his official colleagues, who perhaps were hardly aware of the honour they had enjoyed in being associated with such a man. He now settled down to the quiet life of a student in his picturesque home at Metung, on the shore of the Gippsland Lakes. Gippsland is a pleasant and a beautiful country, with a climate in the lowlands like that of Italy. The orange grows well there : the mountains are high and snow-capped for months together : the rivers wind through deep glens thickly mantled in living green : the gum-trees in the forest are the tallest trees in the world ; and the great tree-ferns give to the woods an aspect of tropical luxuriance. It is Australia Felix, the Happy Land of the South. But Mr. Howitt's seclusion in this earthly Paradise was not to be undisturbed. The old serpent, in the guise of public business, stole into his Eden. He was invited and consented to

act as chairman of a Royal Commission on the coalfields of Victoria, and soon after he had discharged this function he was appointed a member of the Commission to which was entrusted the onerous and difficult task of choosing a site for the future federal capital of Australia. These duties involved much travelling, as well as much critical weighing of evidence, but in spite of all distractions he made steady progress with the revision and completion of his lifelong researches in Australian ethnology. By the summer of 1904 the work was so far advanced that he came to England with his daughter, Miss Mary E. B. Howitt, to see his book through the press. It was then that I had the privilege of making his personal acquaintance. I hastened to greet him in London soon after his arrival, and learned to esteem as a man one whom I had long respected as an anthropologist. Later in the summer, in the month of August, he and his daughter did me the honour of staying for some days in my house at Cambridge to attend the meeting of the British Association. He read a paper "On Group Marriage in Australian Tribes" at the meeting, and the University of Cambridge showed its high appreciation of his services to science by conferring the honorary degree of Doctor of Science upon him. I shall always cherish the memory of his visit and of the conversations we had on the topics in which we both took a deep interest. Later in the autumn he left England for Australia, spending

some time happily in Italy by the way, and there meeting once more a sister whom he had not seen for more than fifty years. Before the end of the same year (1904) the book by which he will always be chiefly remembered was published under the title of *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*. The value and importance of the work are too well known to call for any detailed appreciation or eulogium. It must always remain an anthropological classic and the standard authority on the subject with which it deals.

Much as he had enjoyed his travels in Europe and his visit, after so many years, to the scenes of his youth, he was glad to return to his Australian home ; and he now threw himself with the energy and enthusiasm of youth into his botanical and petrological studies, which the composition of his great book on the Australian natives had compelled him for a time to intermit. He cherished the hope of writing a comprehensive work on the eucalyptus trees of Victoria, and another on the rocks of Gippsland, which no man knew so well as he. But these hopes were not destined to be fulfilled. During the last years of his life he was much concerned by certain misapprehensions and misrepresentations, as he conceived them to be, of facts relating to the Australian aborigines to which currency had been given both in Australia and Europe, and he took great pains to correct these misapprehensions and to give wide publicity to his

corrections. These things absorbed some of his time, and in 1907 he was called on to preside over the meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science at Adelaide. In his Presidential Address he dealt with his reminiscences of exploration in Central Australia, particularly his expeditions to rescue the lost explorers and to bring back their remains. In previous years he had presided over the Ethnological and Geographical Sections of the Association, and had been awarded the first Mueller medal for his many distinguished contributions to Australian science. In the previous year (1906) a Companionship of the Order of St. Michael and St. George (C.M.G.) had been conferred upon him in recognition of his services to the State as well as to learning.

So, full of years and honours, he returned to his home at Metung in January 1907. The even tenour of his studious life was pleasantly diversified by one or two visits to Melbourne and by an expedition into the mountains of the Omeo district to complete his observations on the rocks. The seventy-eight years of his long life sat very lightly on him ; indeed so youthful was he in mind, so keen in intellect, so exuberant in energy, that his friends anticipated with confidence for him yet many years of useful activity. But it was not to be. On the last day of the year 1907, only two days after the death of his old friend Mr. Fison, he was suddenly struck down by haemorrhage of

the stomach. At first the doctors held out every hope of a complete recovery, but they soon saw that the case was beyond their power and that Dr. Howitt's days were numbered. In order that he might be nearer to medical aid, they moved him from his own house at Metung to his son's house at Bairnsdale. For seventy years of an active and adventurous life Dr. Howitt had never been confined to his bed for a single day; but, when the last sickness came, no one could have been more patient and uncomplaining, and he received with steadfast courage the announcement of the doctors that they could do nothing for him. The remaining weeks of his life were passed almost constantly in the sleep of weakness and exhaustion, but with very little acute pain. His thoughts to the last were occupied with his work; his last conscious effort was to dictate from his death-bed a message to anthropologists impressing on them the importance of caution in accepting information drawn from the Australian tribes in their present state of decay. The message, after a delay caused by miscarriage in the post, was published in the *Revue des Études Ethnographiques et Sociologiques* for December 1908. On March the seventh, 1908, Dr. Howitt passed away. His beloved wife, to whose memory he dedicated his great book, had died six years before him. She was a daughter of Judge Boothby of Adelaide, and left him with two sons and three daughters, one of whom, Miss

Mary E. B. Howitt, was his faithful helper in his anthropological labours, and nursed him to the end.

In personal appearance, and to some extent also in manner, no two men could well differ more widely than the fast friends, Fison and Howitt. Fison was a big burly man, powerfully and heavily built, with a jolly good-humoured face, a bluff almost jovial manner, tender-hearted but bubbling over with humour, on which the remembrance of his clerical profession, as well as his deep, absolutely unaffected piety, perhaps imposed a certain restraint. Howitt was a small man, with a spare but well-knit frame, light, active, and inured to exposure and fatigue. His features were keen and finely cut, with deep-set eyes and a penetrating look. It was a hawk's face ; and his brisk alert manner and quick movements added to the resemblance. I remember that, when he stayed in my house at Cambridge, he used not to walk but to run upstairs like a boy, though he was then in his seventy-fifth year. When the two old men met for the last time, " Howitt," said Fison, " do you never feel the infirmities of old age ? " " What are they ? " he answered. While habitually graver than his friend, Howitt was by no means devoid of dry humour, and could tell old stories of the bush with admirable point and zest. On the subject which perhaps occupied their thoughts more than any other, the social organization of the Australian tribes, the two men were in fundamental agree-

ment. On questions much deeper and more perplexing their views differed widely, but the difference never affected their friendship, as indeed such differences need never affect the friendship of honest men alike animated, as these two unquestionably were, by a single-hearted disinterested devotion to truth. They loved each other like brothers in life, and they were not long divided in death. Such were Fison and Howitt as I knew them in their writings and in the flesh. I am proud to have known two such men, and to have numbered them among my friends.

In the history of the science of man the names of Fison and Howitt will be inseparably associated. It will be for others in future, better informed and perhaps more impartial than I am, to pronounce a final judgement on the value of their work as a whole. Here I will single out only what appears to me to be their most important contribution to knowledge —that is, the light which they have thrown on the systems of marriage and relationship prevalent among the Australian aborigines. These systems are of extraordinary interest not merely in themselves, but in their bearing on the history of marriage in general. For the systems agree fundamentally with those practised by races in many other parts of the world; and, though they present peculiarities which have not been discovered elsewhere, these peculiarities themselves appear to be only special developments of the general principles which under-

lie all the systems in question. Perhaps the most striking feature of the Australian systems is their apparent complexity combined with a logical, almost mathematical precision and regularity. Inquirers have long been divided on the question whether this feature is the result of accident or design; whether the Australian aborigines have stumbled on their systems by chance, or have gradually evolved them by conscious reflection and deliberate effort. Most of those who know these savages only by reading about them in books appear to be of opinion that their social systems, for all their appearance of complexity combined with exactness and regularity, are the result of accident, that they grew up through a fortuitous train of circumstances without any prevision or purpose on the part of those who practise them. On the other hand, most of those who are best acquainted with the Australian aborigines, not through books but through personal intercourse, appear to be of opinion that their social systems are the fruit of design, and that they were deliberately devised to ensure the results which they unquestionably achieve. The latter was the opinion of Fison and Howitt, and it is the opinion of their distinguished friends and disciples, Spencer and Gillen.

In the broadest outline, omitting details and minor differences, an aboriginal Australian tribe is divided into two, four, or eight exogamous classes; that is, it consists of two, four, or eight

divisions with a rule that no man may marry a woman of his own division, but may only take a wife from a single one of the other divisions. Thus, if the tribe is divided into two exogamous classes, a man is forbidden to choose his wife from among, roughly speaking, one-half of all the women of the tribe; if the tribe is divided into four exogamous classes, then three-fourths of the women are forbidden to him; and if the tribe is divided into eight exogamous classes, then no less than seven-eighths of the women of the tribe are forbidden to him. So strictly are these rules enforced that in the old days breaches of them were commonly punished by putting both the culprits to death.

With regard to descent, when a tribe is divided into two exogamous classes, the children are always born into the class either of their father or of their mother, the custom in this respect varying in different tribes; for in some tribes the children always belong to their father's class, and in others they always belong to their mother's. When a tribe is divided into four or eight exogamous classes, the children are born into the class neither of their father nor of their mother, but always into another class, which is, however, determined for them without variation by the particular classes to which their parents belong.

It will hardly be denied that these systems, particularly the rule of the four-class or eight-class organization, that children can never belong

to the class either of their father or of their mother, have at least a superficial appearance of being artificial; and the inference that they must have been deliberately devised, not created by a series of accidents, in other words, that they are a product of reason, not of chance, is confirmed by a closer examination. For it can easily be shown that the effect of dividing a tribe into two exogamous classes is to prevent the marriage of brothers with sisters; that the effect of dividing a tribe into four exogamous classes, with the characteristic rule of descent, is to prevent the marriage of parents with children;[1] and that the effect of dividing a tribe into eight exogamous classes, with the characteristic rule of descent, is to prevent a man's children from marrying his sister's children—that is, its effect is to prevent the marriage of some, though not all, of those whom we call first cousins. As all the marriages which these rules actually bar are abhorred by the Australian aborigines who observe the rules, it is natural to infer that the effect which the rules produce is the effect which they were designed to produce; in other words, that the rules, which have certainly the appearance of being artificial, are really so, having been devised to accomplish the

[1] That the division into two and four exogamous classes, with the peculiar rule of descent in the four-class system, not only produced these effects but was intended to produce them, was clearly stated by Dr. Howitt in his paper, "Notes on the Australian Class Systems," *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute, etc.* vol. xii. (1883) pp. 496 *sqq.* See above, pp. 240 *sq.*

very object which in point of fact they do very successfully achieve. If this inference is sound, the deliberate institution of the Australian marriage system may be taken as proved.

The objections raised to this view by those who know the Australian natives only or mainly through books resolve themselves, roughly speaking, into two. First, they deny that the Australian savages are capable of thinking out a marriage system at once so complex and so regular. But this objection is outweighed by the testimony of those who best know the Australian aborigines personally, such as Dr. Howitt and Messrs. Spencer and Gillen,[1] in whose opinion the natives are quite capable both of conceiving and of executing the system in question. That the natives understand their complex system perfectly, and work it smoothly and regularly, is certain. Why, then, should they not have originated it? Would they be more likely to understand and work it, as they do, without any serious hitch, if they had drifted into it by accident than if they had thought it out for themselves?

The other objection often brought against the

[1] A. W. Howitt, "Notes on the Australian Class Systems," *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute, etc.* vol. xii. (1883) pp. 496 *sqq.*; *id.*, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, pp. 89 *sq.*, 140, 143; Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 12-15, 69; *id.*, *Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 123 *sq.*; *id.*, "Some Remarks on Totemism as applied to Australian Tribes," *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute, etc.* vol. xxviii. (1899) p. 278; (Sir) Baldwin Spencer, "Totemism in Australia," in *Transactions of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science*, Dunedin, 1904, pp. 419 *sq.*

theory of the deliberate institution of the Australian marriage system is that, if the system was designed to prevent the marriage of brothers with sisters, of parents with children, and of a man's children with his sister's children, it greatly over-shoots the mark by simultaneously barring the marriage of many other persons who stand in none of these relationships to each other. This objection implies a total misconception of the Australian system of relationships. For, according to the classificatory system of relationship, which is universally prevalent among the Australian aborigines, the terms father, mother, brother, sister, son, and daughter are employed in a far wider signification than with us, so as to include many persons who are no blood relations at all to the speaker. The system sorts out the whole community into classes or groups, which are variously designated by these terms: the relationship which it recognizes between members of a class or group is social, not consanguineous; and though each class or group includes the blood relations whom we designate by the corresponding terms, it includes many more, and for social purposes a man does not distinguish between the members of a group who are related to him by blood and those members of the group who are not so related to him. Each man has thus many "fathers" who never begat him, and many "mothers" who never bore him; he calls many men and women his "brothers" and "sisters"

with whom he has not a drop of blood in common; and he bestows the names of "sons" and "daughters" on many boys and girls, many men and women, who are not his offspring.

Now, if we assume, as we have every right to do, that the founders of exogamy in Australia recognized the classificatory system of relationship, and the classificatory system of relationship only, we shall at once perceive that what they intended to prevent was not merely the marriage of a man with his sister, his mother, or his daughter in the physical sense in which we use these terms; their aim was to prevent his marriage with his sister, his mother, and his daughter in the classificatory sense of these terms; that is, they intended to place bars to marriage not between individuals merely but between the whole groups of persons who designated their group not their individual relationships, their social not their consanguineous ties, by the names of father and mother, brother and sister, son and daughter. And in this intention the founders of exogamy succeeded perfectly. In the completest form of the system, namely, the division of the community into eight exogamous classes, they barred the marriage of group brothers with group sisters, of group fathers with group daughters, of group mothers with group sons, and of the sons of group brothers with the daughters of group sisters. Thus the dichotomy of an Australian tribe in its completest form,

namely, in the eight-class organization, was not a clumsy expedient which overshot its mark by separating from each other many persons whom the authors of it had no intention of separating: it was a device admirably adapted to effect just what its inventors intended, neither more nor less.

But while there are strong grounds for thinking that the system of exogamy has been deliberately devised and instituted by the Australian aborigines for the purpose of effecting just what it does effect, it would doubtless be a mistake to suppose that its most complex form, the eight-class system, was struck out at a single blow. All the evidence and probability are in favour of the view that the system originated in a simple bisection of the community into two exogamous classes only; that, when this was found insufficient to bar marriages which the natives regarded as objectionable, each of the two classes was again subdivided into two, making four exogamous classes in all; and finally that, when four exogamous classes still proved inadequate for the purpose, each of them was again subdivided into two, making eight exogamous classes in all. Thus from a simple beginning the Australian aborigines appear to have advanced step by step to the complex system of eight exogamous classes, the process being one of successive bisections or dichotomies. The first bisection barred the marriage of brothers with sisters: the second bisection, combined with the

characteristic rule of descent, which places the children in a different class both from the father and from the mother, barred the marriage of parents with children; and the third bisection, combined with a rule of descent like the preceding, barred the marriage of a man's children with his sister's children, in other words, it prevented the marriage of some, but not all, of those whom we call first cousins.[1]

But, if the system was devised to prevent the marriage of brothers with sisters, of parents with children, and of a man's children with his sister's children, it seems to follow that such marriages were common before the system was instituted to check them; in short, it implies that exogamy was a deliberate prohibition of a former unrestricted practice of incest, which allowed the nearest relations to mate with each other. This implication is confirmed, as Messrs. Howitt, Spencer, and Gillen have shown for the tribes of Central Australia, by customs which can be reasonably interpreted only as a system of group marriage or as survivals of a still wider practice of sexual communism. And, as the custom of exogamy combined with the classificatory system of relationship is not confined to Australia, but is found among many races in many parts of the world, it becomes probable that

[1] These two last paragraphs I have allowed myself to quote from my book, *Totemism and Exogamy* (vol. i. pp. 282 *sq.*, 288), to which I would refer my readers for a fuller explanation and discussion of a somewhat intricate subject.

a large part, if not the whole, of the human race have at one time, not necessarily the earliest, in their history permitted the practice of incest, that is, of the closest interbreeding, and that, having perceived or imagined the practice to be injurious, they deliberately forbade and took effective measures to prevent it.

That is the great generalization reached by Lewis H. Morgan from his discovery of the classificatory system of relationship. It is perhaps the most remarkable achievement of Fison and Howitt first, and of their disciples Spencer and Gillen afterwards, that their researches among the Australian tribes have not only lent powerful support to the conclusions of the American ethnologist, but have given us an insight into the machinery by which the great social reform was effected. The machinery was, indeed, simple : it consisted merely in the bisection, whether single or repeated, of the whole community into two exogamous classes. In Australia the application of this machinery to effect this purpose is seen more clearly than in any other part of the world, because in many Australian tribes the bisection has been repeated oftener than anywhere else, or, rather, oftener than it is known to have been repeated elsewhere ; for it is possible that among other races of men similar secondary and tertiary subdivisions have occurred, though they seem now to have vanished without leaving a trace. The oldest social stratification, so to

say, of mankind is better preserved among the Australian aborigines than among any other people of whom we have knowledge. To have obtained an accurate record of that stratification before it finally disappeared, as it must very soon do, is an achievement of the highest importance for the understanding of human history; and we owe the possession of that record, now safely deposited in the archives of science, mainly to the exertions and the influence of Fison and Howitt.

IV

MISCELLANIES

I

THE TAKING OF THE REDOUBT

(From the French of Prosper Mérimée.)

A MILITARY friend of mine, who died of fever in Greece some years ago, one day gave me the story of the first affair in which he took part. The narrative struck me so much that I wrote it down from memory as soon as I had leisure. Here it is :

I joined my regiment on the evening of the fourth September. I found the Colonel in camp. He received me at first rather brusquely, but after reading the letter of introduction from General B—— his manner changed, and he addressed me a few polite words.

He presented me to my captain, who had that moment returned from a reconnaissance. The captain, whom I had scarcely time to know, was a tall dark man, with hard and repellent features. He had been in the ranks, and had gained his epaulets and cross on the battle-field. His voice, which was hoarse and weak, contrasted singularly

with his almost gigantic stature. I was told that his queer voice was due to a bullet which had gone clean through him at the battle of Jena.

On learning that I was fresh from the school of Fontainebleau, he made a grimace and said, "My lieutenant was killed yesterday," I knew he meant to say: "It's you who are to take his place, and you are not fit for it." A retort was on my lips, but I checked myself.

The moon rose behind the redoubt of Cheverino, situated a couple of cannon-shots from our lines. It was large and red, as it usually is at rising. But that evening it seemed to me extraordinarily large. For a moment the redoubt stood out black against the bright disc of the moon. It looked like the cone of a volcano at the instant of eruption.

An old soldier beside me remarked the colour of the moon. "It is very red," said he, "that's a sign it will cost us dear to take it, that blessed old redoubt." I have always been superstitious, and this augury, especially at such a moment, affected me. I lay down, but could not sleep, so I got up and walked for a while, watching the vast line of fires that covered the heights beyond the village of Cheverino.

When I thought that my blood had been refreshed enough by the keen night air, I returned to the fire, wrapped myself up carefully in my cloak, and closed my eyes, hoping not to open them till daylight. But sleep would not come.

Gradually my thoughts took a sombre hue. I said to myself that I had not a single friend among the hundred thousand men who covered the plain. If I were wounded I should be in a hospital, carelessly treated by ignorant surgeons. All that I had heard about surgical operations came back upon me. My heart beat violently, and mechanically I arranged as a sort of breast-plate my handkerchief and the pocket-book I carried in the breast of my coat. Fatigue overpowered me; every instant I was falling asleep, and every instant some sinister thought returned with fresh force, and awoke me with a start.

However, weariness at last prevailed, and when the reveille sounded I was fast asleep. We fell in, and the roll was called; then we stacked arms, and everything seemed to show that we were going to pass a quiet day.

About three o'clock an aide-de-camp arrived with an order. We got under arms again: our skirmishers spread out in the plain: we followed them slowly, and at the end of twenty minutes we saw the Russian outposts falling back and retiring into the redoubt.

A battery of artillery took up position on our right, and another on our left, but both were a long way in front of us. They opened a hot fire on the enemy, who replied vigorously, and soon the redoubt of Cheverino disappeared in thick clouds of smoke.

Our regiment was almost sheltered from the Russian fire by a rise in the ground. Their shots (there were not many of them, for they fired by preference at our artillerymen) passed over our heads, or at most sent us showers of earth and pebbles.

As soon as the order to advance was given, my captain observed me so attentively that I was obliged to pass my hand two or three times over my budding moustache with as easy an air as I could assume. I really was not afraid, the only fear I had was that they might think I was afraid. Besides, these harmless shots helped to keep me in my heroic calm. I was flattered by the idea that I ran a real risk, being now at last under fire of a battery. I was delighted at feeling so much at my ease, and I thought how pleasant it would be to tell of the taking of the redoubt of Cheverino in the drawing-room of Madame de B——, Rue de Provence.

The colonel passed in front of our company; he spoke to me, "Well, you are going to see sharp work for your beginning." I smiled with a martial air, brushing the sleeve of my coat, which had received a little dust from a shot that had fallen about thirty paces off.

It appeared that the Russians saw the small effect of their shots, for they exchanged them for shells, which could reach us more easily in the dip where we were posted. There was a loud noise,

my shako was knocked off, and a man beside me was killed.

"My compliments to you," said the captain when I had picked up my shako, "you have had your share for the day." I knew of the military superstition that the maxim *non bis in idem* applies to a battle-field as well as to a court of justice. Putting on my shako with a jaunty air, "Rather an unceremonious way," said I, "of making a man take off his hat." It was a poor joke, but in the circumstance it passed for excellent. "I congratulate you," said the captain again, "you'll have no more of it, and you'll command a company to-night, for I know the oven is heating for me. Every time I've been hit the officer next me has received a spent ball, and," added he, in a lower tone, almost as if he were ashamed, "their names always began with a P."

By the end of half an hour the Russian fire slackened sensibly; then we issued from our cover to march on the redoubt.

Our regiment was composed of three battalions. The second was to turn the redoubt on the side of the gully; the other two were to deliver the assault. I was in the third battalion.

On issuing from the sort of breastwork which had sheltered us, we were met by several volleys of musketry, which did little harm in our ranks. The whistling of the bullets surprised me. I often turned my head, and so drew down on myself

some chaff from my comrades, who were more familiar with the sound. "After all," said I to myself, "a battle is not such a terrible thing."

We advanced at the double, preceded by skirmishers. All of a sudden the Russians gave three hurrahs, three distinct hurrahs, then remained silent and without firing. "I don't like that silence," said my captain, "it means no good to us." I thought our fellows just a trifle too noisy, and could not help mentally contrasting their tumultuous cries with the impressive silence of the enemy.

We soon reached the foot of the redoubt. The palisades had been broken and the earth tumbled about by our shots. The men rushed on these newly-made ruins with shouts of "Vive l'Empereur" much louder than could have been expected from people who had already shouted so much.

I looked up, and never shall I forget the sight I saw. The smoke had mostly risen and remained hanging like a canopy twenty feet above the redoubt. Through a bluish vapour we saw the Russian grenadiers standing behind their half-ruined parapet with their muskets raised, motionless as statues. I think I see them still, every man with his left eye fixed on us, his right hidden by his raised musket. In an embrasure a few paces from us a man with a lighted match was standing beside a gun.

I shuddered and thought that my last hour was

come. "Here's a pretty dance about to begin," cried my captain, "good-night." They were the last words I heard him speak.

A roll of drums was heard in the redoubt. I saw the muskets brought down. I closed my eyes, and heard a frightful noise, followed by cries and groans. I opened my eyes, surprised at finding myself still alive. The redoubt was once more wrapped in smoke. I was surrounded by wounded and dead. My captain lay at my feet; his head had been smashed by a bullet, and I was bespattered with his blood and brains. Out of my whole company there were left standing only six men and myself.

This carnage was succeeded by a moment of stupor. The colonel, putting his cap on the point of his sword, was the first to climb the parapet, crying "Vive l'Empereur," and was immediately followed by all the survivors. I hardly remember what followed. I don't know how we got into the redoubt. There was a hand-to-hand fight in the midst of a smoke so thick that you could not see yourself. I suppose I must have used my sword, for it was all bloody. At last I heard cries of victory, and, the smoke clearing a little, I saw the blood and the corpses, which completely hid the soil of the redoubt. The guns especially were buried under heaps of dead. About two hundred men left standing, in French uniform, were grouped without order, some loading their muskets, others

wiping their bayonets. Among them were eleven Russian prisoners.

The colonel lay on his back, covered with blood, on a broken caisson close to the gully. Some soldiers were pressing round him, and I joined the group. "Where is the senior captain?" he asked of a sergeant. The sergeant shrugged his shoulders expressively. "And the senior lieutenant?" "Here he is, the gentleman who came yesterday," said the sergeant quite calmly. The colonel smiled bitterly. "Come, sir," said he, "you are in command. Have the redoubt strengthened with tumbrels immediately, on the side of the gully, for the enemy is in force. But General C—— will support you." "Colonel," said I, "are you badly hurt?" "——— my dear fellow; but the redoubt is taken."

II

VETERANS OF THE OLD GUARD

15 December

(From the French of Théophile Gautier.)

I was weary, and left my chamber
To saunter down the street :
'Twas drear December weather,
Cold wind and rain and sleet.

And there, in the sickly daylight,
'Scaped from the sunless land,
Through the rain and the mud of the city
There strode a spectral band.

As a rule ghosts choose to stalk
By the glint of a German moon
In the ruins of an ivied tower,
But not in the light of noon.

By night the Water Lady
Comes in her dripping gown
To drag the wearied waltzer
Through the water-lilies down.

By night the troops are paraded
In the ballad of Zedlitz,
Where the shadowy emperor musters
The ghosts of Austerlitz.

But spectres in the city !
Ghosts in the crowded lane !
With never a shroud or a grave-cloth,
And dripping, too, with rain !

A really remarkable vision—
Three wraiths of toothless loons
In the facings of the Old Guard
With shadows of dragoons !

As in Raffet's great engraving
The dead go trooping by,
And squadron after squadron
" Napoleon ! " still they cry.

But it was not the dead who wake
To the tuck of the midnight drum :
'Twas a few of the Old Guard keeping
The day of the great Home-come.

Since was fought the final battle
They have grown, one fat, one thin ;
The coat of the one needs letting out,
Of the other, taking in.

Proud rags ! illustrious tatters
With the medal for a star !

I'd rather wear those tatters
Than reign the Russian Czar !

The draggled plume droops sadly,
The shako is battered and worn,
In the tunic the moth has widened
The holes by the bullets torn.

The buckskins hang in creases
On thighs all skin and bones,
The rusty sabre rattles
As it smites on the paving-stones.

Another is stout and breathless,
He puffs as his brow he wipes,
His coat he can hardly button,
This hero of medals and stripes !

Nay, sneer not, O my comrade,
But bow with reverence due
To the men of a greater Iliad
Than ever Homer drew.

Honour the head so hoary,
And the brow all bronzed and scored
With the furrows of age and of glory
Trenched by the slash of sword !

Egyptian suns have darkened
The skin in boyhood fair ;
And Russian snows have whitened
What once was raven hair.

Their palsied hands are trembling ;
  They limp, but do not smile ;
For long is the march and weary
  To Moscow from the Nile.

Let the urchin jeer and hollo !
  'Tis not for us to slight
The men who were the morning,
  While we are the eve and the night.

If *we* forget, *they* remember,
  Red lancer and blue grenadier :
They are come to the column to worship,
  Their only god is here.

Here, proud of all they suffered
  By wounds and snows and heats,
They feel, 'neath their tattered garments,
  'Tis the heart of France that beats.

So the laughter is blent with weeping
  To see this carnival,
This masque imperial passing,
  Like mummers from a ball.

And the Grand Army's eagle,
  From its heaven with glory starr'd,
Spreads its golden wings triumphant
  O'er the Veterans of the Guard.

III

FOR A SCRAP OF PAPER

(From the French of Paul Hyacinthe Loyson.)

Why bursts the cloud in thunder, and to devastate the world
The levin bolt of battle from heaven, or hell, is hurled?
Why march embattled millions, to death or victory sworn?
Why gape yon lanes of carnage by red artillery torn?
For a scrap of paper, for a scrap of paper, nothing more!

Why spurned the least of nations, but the bravest of the brave,
The wages of dishonour and a traitor's peaceful grave?

Why drew she sword ? and flinging the scabbard far
away
Why rushed she into battle, the foremost in the
fray ?
For a scrap of paper, for a scrap of paper, nothing
more !

When the Queen of Empires summoned her
children to her shore,
And to set the ocean rolling she but spoke a word—
no more—
" Oh come to me, my children, to your mother,
come to me ! "
Why flocked the regiments trooping from the lands
beyond the sea ?
For a scrap of paper, for a scrap of paper, nothing
more !

Why hasted all the peoples to confront the bandit
crew,
When they heard the tocsin tolling and the blast
that Justice blew ?
Why thrilled they at the summons, and answered
one and all,
By thousand thousands thronging, to the far-blown
bugle-call ?
For a scrap of paper, for a scrap of paper, nothing
more !

FOR A SCRAP OF PAPER

When the guns have ceased to thunder and the
battle-storm to rave,
When the stars above are calling the last muster
of the brave,
As they lie there in their thousands, with their
faces to the sky,
We can hear their voices answer, "We were glad
and proud to die
For a scrap of paper, for a scrap of paper, nothing
more!"

IV

FRENCH AND ENGLISH CHIVALRY

In a journal intended to draw closer the ties between France and England by helping the two peoples to a better understanding of each other,[1] it may not be inappropriate to recall one feature which the very different characters of the two nations have in common—their chivalry in war. The courtesies which brave men exhibit to gallant adversaries on the battle-field, whether in victory or in defeat, are among the most graceful and most touching manifestations of human nature at its best, and go far to redeem war from the horror of simple butchery. For they imply a union of courage with humanity and even with tenderness, which is all the more impressive because it is displayed under circumstances which, in base natures, give loose to all the vilest passions, and which, even in common men, reveal the latent weaknesses that are usually veiled under the decent conventions of ordinary life. The

[1] This piece was first published in *The French Quarterly*, No. 1, January 1919.

mind that in the heat of battle, in the intoxication of victory, and in the gloom of defeat can not only stand firm in itself but remember all that is due to the dignity and the feelings of others, must surely be moulded of finer than common stuff and be entitled to that meed of admiration which mankind instinctively bestows on those who stand out conspicuously above their fellows by their inbred qualities of head and heart. In the long history of the wars which France and England waged on each other, it is fortunately easy to cull many instances of such noble courtesies. Without making any special researches, I will mention a few familiar instances.

In a fierce and bloody combat, which took place between the French and English under the walls of Calais, King Edward the Third of England fought as a private man and engaged a French gentleman, named Eustace de Ribaumont. The encounter was long and dangerous. The king was twice beaten to the ground, but twice recovered himself. At last victory declared for him, and the Frenchman was constrained to surrender his sword to his unknown adversary, saying, "Sir Knight, I yield myself your prisoner." After the engagement "the French officers who had fallen into the hands of the English were conducted into Calais, where Edward discovered to them the antagonist with whom they had the honour to be engaged, and treated them with great regard and courtesy.

They were admitted to sup with the Prince of Wales and the English nobility, and after supper the King himself came into the apartment, and went about, conversing familiarly with one or other of his prisoners. . . . But he openly bestowed the highest encomiums on Ribaumont; called him the most valorous knight that he had ever been acquainted with, and confessed that he himself had at no time been in so great danger as when engaged in combat with him. He then took a string of pearls which he wore about his own head, and throwing it over the head of Ribaumont, he said to him, 'Sir Eustace, I bestow this present upon you as a testimony of my esteem for your bravery, and I desire you to wear it a year for my sake. I know you to be gay and amorous, and to take delight in the company of ladies and damsels: let them all know from what hand you had the present. You are no longer a prisoner; I acquit you of your ransom, and you are at liberty to-morrow to dispose of yourself as you think proper.'" [1]

The son of this gallant king, Edward the Black Prince, not long afterwards proved himself worthy of his father by the elaborate courtesy with which, after the great victory of Poictiers, he treated his royal captive John, King of France. "Here commences the real and truly admirable heroism of Edward, for victories are vulgar things in com-

[1] Hume, *History of England*, chap. xv. vol. ii. pp. 445 *sq.* (Edinburgh, 1810), referring to Froissart, Bk. 1. chaps. cxl., cxli., cxlii.

parison of that moderation and humanity displayed by a young prince of twenty-seven years of age, not yet cooled from the fury of battle, and elated by as extraordinary and as unexpected success as had ever crowned the arms of any commander. He came forth to meet the captive king with all the marks of regard and sympathy, administered comfort to him amidst his misfortunes, paid him the tribute of praise due to his valour, and ascribed his own victory merely to the blind chance of war, or to a superior providence which controls all the efforts of human force and prudence. The behaviour of John showed him not unworthy of this courteous treatment. His present abject fortune never made him forget a moment that he was a king. More touched by Edward's generosity than by his own calamities, he confessed that, notwithstanding his defeat and captivity, his honour was still unimpaired, and that if he yielded the victory, it was at least gained by a prince of such consummate valour and humanity. Edward ordered a repast to be prepared in his tent for the prisoner, and he himself served at the royal captive's table, as if he had been one of his retinue. He stood at the king's back during the meal, constantly refused to take a place at table, and declared that, being a subject, he was too well acquainted with the distance between his own rank and that of royal majesty to assume such freedom. All his father's pretensions to the crown of France were now buried

in oblivion. John, in captivity, received the honours of a king, which were refused him when seated on the throne. His misfortunes, not his title, were respected; and the French prisoners, conquered by this elevation of mind more than by their late discomfiture, burst into tears of admiration, which were only checked by the reflection, that such genuine and unaltered heroism in an enemy must certainly, in the issue, prove but the more dangerous to their native country." [1]

At the battle of Fontenoy, when the English Guards, led by Lieutenant-General Campbell, Major-General the Earl of Albemarle, and Brigadier Churchhill, had advanced to within fifty paces of the French Guards, the English officers saluted the French officers by taking off their hats. On the French side the Comte de Chabanes and the Duc de Biron, who were in front, and all the officers of the Guards returned the salute. Lord Charles Hay, captain of the English Guards, then cried out, "Gentlemen of the French Guards, fire!" The Comte de Hauteroche, lieutenant in the Grenadiers, answered in a loud voice, "Gentlemen, we never fire first. Fire yourselves!" The English replied by a rolling fire which laid hundreds of their gallant adversaries in the dust. The anecdote is reported by Voltaire, who probably had it from an eyewitness, for he was a contemporary,

[1] Hume, *History of England*, chap. xvi. vol. ii. pp. 459 *sq.*, referring to Froissart, Bk. 1. chap. clxviii.

and his narrative contains features which could only have been known to one who was actually present at the engagement; for example, he tells how, when the English column advanced firing, with slow steps, as if on parade, the officers were seen to press down the muskets of their men with their canes to make them fire low and straight.[1]

After the battle of Dettingen the English, though they claimed the victory, retired from the battle-field and had not time to remove their wounded. Accordingly Lord Stair wrote a letter to the French commander, the Marshal Duc de Noailles, recommending the English wounded to his generosity. The Marshal replied in a courteous letter, and the French cared for the English wounded as if they had been their own countrymen. In this battle the Duke of Cumberland was wounded by a bullet in the leg. When the surgeon was about to dress the wound, it happened that a French musketeer, named Girardeau, dangerously wounded, was carried

[1] Voltaire, *Siècle de Louis XV.*, chap. xv. (*Siècles de Louis XIV. et de Louis XV.*, Paris, 1820, vol. iii. pp. 259 *sq.*). The incident is related, from the English side, somewhat differently by Carlyle on the evidence of a letter which Lord Charles Hay, lieutenant in the Grenadiers, wrote three weeks after the battle. See Carlyle, *History of Frederick the Great*, Bk. xv. chap. viii. vol. vi. pp. 44 *sq.* (London, 1873). Compare J. S. Leadham, *History of England from the Accession of Anne to the Death of George II.* (London, 1909), pp. 386 *sq.* The Earl of Albemarle was Lord Bury at the time of the battle of Fontenoy. His regiment was the Coldstream Guards, of which he was promoted to be lieutenant-colonel about a fortnight after the battle. He did not succeed to the earldom till 1754. See *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. xxxi. (London, 1892) pp. 42 *sq.*

near the duke's tent. The duke at once stopped the surgeon and said, "Attend to this French officer first, his hurt is worse than mine. He might be overlooked, I shall not." [1]

After the battle of Corunna, in which Sir John Moore died a hero's death, "the guns of the enemy paid his funeral honours, and Soult, with a noble feeling of respect for his valour, raised a monument to his memory on the field of battle." [2] In his old age Marshal Soult came to England to represent Louis Philippe at the coronation of Queen Victoria, and received a warm welcome from the English people, who know how to respect and honour a gallant and chivalrous enemy. They cheered him till they were hoarse whenever he appeared in public, and they shook hands with him to such an extent that the Marshal's arm was worn out, and he had to depute the task of hand-shaking to the members of his staff. At Manchester, when the railway carriage conveying Soult entered the station, it was so beset by an enthusiastic crowd clinging to the footboards, clambering on the roof, and thrusting their heads and hands in at the windows, that some time elapsed before the police, by Herculean efforts, were able to wrench open the door of the carriage and make standing-room for the Marshal on the platform, and even then he was all but swept off

[1] Voltaire, *Siècle de Louis XV.*, chap. x. (Paris, 1820, vol. iii. pp. 213 *sq.*).

[2] Sir William Napier, *History of the War in the Peninsula*, vol. i. (London, 1835) p. 510.

his feet in the press. As he drove in an open carriage through the streets, he was surrounded and followed by a running mob continually shouting, "Soult for ever!" while their cheers were echoed by tens of thousands of grimy, shrivelled heads projecting in bunches from the innumerable windows of the high, black, smoky factories which the Marshal passed in his triumphal progress. When he visited the docks at Liverpool, the banks of the river were crowded with multitudes for the whole distance: the river was covered with boats: every ship, of every nation, was gay with flags; and the shouting and waving of hats were incessant. At Birmingham a public dinner was given in honour of the illustrious guest. In proposing Soult's health, the chairman dwelt particularly on the tribute of respect which he had paid to the remains of Sir John Moore. This seemed to touch Soult's gallant heart. He rose with great animation, and after rapidly returning thanks for the usual honour paid to his king, he broke out in praise of Sir John Moore and the English army.

"I learned," he said, "to esteem them in the field of battle, and since I have been in England I have acquired a feeling warmer than esteem. I find them as worthy and kind and generous towards their ancient enemies as they are brave and honest in battle, for I speak not alone of their courage when I call them worthy of esteem as enemies. From Lord Wellington and all the British officers whom

I had the honour to meet in fight I ever experienced frank and loyal conduct; we fought for our respective countries, but like men without rancour, without any feelings of personal anger. I admire and respect them both as friends and foes, and I now give 'the British Army and Navy.'"

To this toast thanks were returned for the British Army by Colonel (afterwards General) Sir William Napier, who had fought against Soult in many pitched battles of the Peninsular War, and of whom it might with truth be said that it was his lot *et facere scribenda et scribere legenda.* In his speech, in which he referred in terms of warm admiration to "the great French captain who now sits here your honoured guest," there occurs the following passage, which well expresses the feelings of many English hearts at the present time:

"But there is a higher gratification to be derived from this happy meeting by every person who has the welfare of mankind at heart; the hearty, generous reception which has been given to Marshal Soult, and the contentment which he has thereby received, and has this night expressed in such simple, feeling, and dignified language, may be hailed as a sign, a great sign, and a testimony that all ancient feuds, all ill blood, all heartburnings, all hostility between England and France, those two great nations, have passed away and are forgotten, and that henceforth the only rivalry will be a generous emulation in works of peace and utility.

England and France! I have called them two great nations. The expression is feeble. They are the two greatest nations in the world. Others may hereafter equal, perhaps surpass them; I know not what may be in the womb of time, but in arts, in arms, in learning, in genius, in power, and in renown they are now unmatched. Their quarrels have heretofore shaken the world, producing great calamity and incalculable evil; their friendship must therefore necessarily produce incalculable good." [1]

A less famous, but not less beautiful instance of French chivalry is recorded in the Peninsular War. In a cavalry skirmish at El Bodon a French officer had raised his sword to strike an English officer, Sir Felton Harvey, but noticing that the Englishman had only one arm, he instantly brought down his sword to the salute and rode past.[2] The Englishman lived to tell the tale, but no one ever knew who the Frenchman was. He may have been killed in the next minute. Yet whoever he was, and whatever his rank, this one act, conceived and executed in a flash, proves him to have been a true knight in the finest sense of the word, in the sense that Milton used the word when he said that every free and gentle spirit, without the oath, ought to be born a knight, nor needed the gilt spur or the

[1] H. A. Bruce, *Life of General Sir William Napier* (London, 1864), vol. i. chap. xiv. pp. 485, 488 *sqq.*, 492, 500 *sqq.*

[2] Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help* (London, 1877), p. 403.

laying of a sword upon his shoulder to stir him up, both by his counsel and his arms, to secure and protect the weakness of attempted innocence.[1]

The courtesies of war, which French and English soldiers so often exchanged when they met as foes on the battle-field, have not ceased to be reciprocated now that enmity has happily been exchanged for comradeship in arms. When Lille, after four years of occupation, was at last evacuated by the enemy, and the army of deliverance was about to march into the city, an English regiment, which was to have headed the procession, rightly stood aside and allowed a French regiment to take the place of honour and to receive the first overwhelming demonstrations of joy heaped by the delivered on the deliverers. And in the great and final advance on the Marne, when the tide of Teutonic invasion was at last stemmed and rolled back, a Highland regiment marched side by side with the French regiments to the assault of the German position. Many Scotsmen and many Frenchmen fell in the attack, and after the battle the French, with a touching gratitude, set up a monument on the spot to the Highlanders who had come so far from their misty mountains and stormy seas to fight and die for France. On the monument they carved a French inscription, which set forth that "Here the thistles of Scotland will bloom for ever among the roses of France."

[1] Milton, *An Apology for Smectymnus.*

These are among the things that endear the two nations to each other, knitting them together by ties that are indeed ties of blood, and stronger and more enduring than iron. For these and a thousand other reasons, for all the crowded and splendid memories of French achievement in arts and letters as well as in arms, we in this country honour and love the French and are proud to hail them as brothers. The very name of France is a sound to stir our blood as with the blast of a trumpet. To borrow the proud words inscribed over the palace of Versailles, we join the whole civilized world in a tribute of heartfelt affection and admiration

A toutes les gloires de la France.

V

MODERN ITALY AND GREECE

A CONTRAST

A THOUGHTFUL traveller in Greece and Italy can hardly fail to be struck by the paucity of relics of the Middle Ages in the one country, and their frequency in the other. In Greece he may journey for hours or even days together, without seeing any work of man's hand to remind him of the two thousand years or more which divide the stately remains of ancient temples and palaces and fortresses from the mean cottages of the modern peasantry. A few—a very few—fine Byzantine churches, with their mosaics and eikons, the mouldering ruins of Venetian castles, and monasteries which contrast by their squalor and poverty with the natural beauty of their surroundings, are almost the only monuments bequeathed to modern Greece by the centuries which have enriched modern Italy in profusion with all the splendour of mediæval architecture and sculpture and painting. And it is not merely the rarity, but the style of the remains

of the Middle Ages which impresses the mind of a traveller in Greek lands with a melancholy sense of artistic and national decay. He contrasts the stiff grotesque figures and narrow limitations of Byzantine art with the noble freedom and variety of ancient Greek sculpture : he turns from the rude masonry of the Venetian castles, their rough little stones hastily huddled together without order, to contrast with it the massive solidity and beautiful symmetry of ancient Greek fortifications, where the great blocks are hewn and squared to a nicety, and laid together in such exact order that it is frequently difficult to detect the joinings. Yet these magnificent walls often mark the sites of little towns which played an insignificant part in Greek history, and of which even the names are in many cases forgotten. Few things can testify more eloquently to the populousness and wealth, as well as to the patriotism, the energy, and the skill of those tiny Greek communities, than the ruined but still splendid walls and towers by which they sought to guard their liberty ; few things can set in a stronger light the decline of modern by comparison with ancient Greece. It is almost as if in the history of the country the Middle Ages had been blotted out, or as if from the reign of Justinian to the War of Liberation the land had been destitute of human inhabitants or tenanted only by flocks and herds under the charge of a few wandering shepherds and herdsmen.

The causes of this long period of intellectual and moral stagnation, or rather retrogression, are no doubt many and various. By the crushing weight of her financial oppression, Rome at once drained the material resources and sapped the vital energies of the people, while at the same time her world-wide dominion, powerfully seconded by the teachings of a cosmopolitan religion, dissolved the ties of purely local patriotism and broke the spring of those civic virtues which that patriotism had fostered. On the nation, thus impoverished and enfeebled, there fell like an incubus the long blight of the Turkish dominion, which completed the work of degradation and decay. While the Turk as a man appears to have many good qualities, which win him the esteem of those who know him, the Turks as a people are to all intents as unprogressive as their own sheep and oxen. They may discard the turban for the fez, the yataghan for the bayonet, the bow and arrow for the rifle and the machine gun, but in the frame of their minds and the circle of their ideas they are what their forefathers were, when their hordes emerged from the deserts of Central Asia and trampled under foot the last surviving relics of the Byzantine Empire. In the centuries which have elapsed since they established their alien rule on European soil, have they contributed anything to European literature or science or art? Have they produced a single man who is known to the world at large

for anything but the wars he waged or the massacres he ordered? Since the advance of their victorious arms ceased to be a menace to European civilization, Turkey has served only as a makeweight in European politics, to be thrown from time to time into the scales by unscrupulous statesmen in order to trim the balance of power or to incline it in their own favour.

It is one of the many blessings of Italy that she has never been subject to the rule of these Asiatic barbarians, that the Turk has never gained even a foothold on her soil. True, she has bowed her neck to the yoke of many northern invaders from the days of the Goths onward, but barbarous as have been many of her conquerors, they have been at least more or less akin to her in race and language, and some of them have contributed to the glories of Italian art, and probably also of Italian literature. Certainly these invasions have never for any long period together interrupted the course of native Italian genius. The fall of the Roman Empire was followed by the rise of the separate Italian states, each with its active municipal life, its industries and commerce, its local art and literature. And in Italy the darkness of the Middle Ages was a prelude to the splendid dawn of the Renaissance. The sun of ancient learning which set on Constantinople rose again on Rome: the fall of the Byzantine Empire scattered the dying embers of Greek scholarship and blew them up into fresh fire in

Italy, which handed them on to the West. Hence Italy, unlike Greece, is crowded with monuments of the Middle Ages, of the Renaissance, and of the fruitful centuries which have elapsed since that mighty awakening of the European mind : it is haunted by the memories of the great men who in every department of human activity have illuminated and enriched not only their country, but mankind by the energy of their character, the range of their knowledge, the originality of their ideas, the light and fire of their imagination. The busy marts, the great libraries, the magnificent churches, the stately palaces, the glowing canvases, the breathing sculptures in bronze and marble which adorn Italian cities, are only the most obvious, because the outward and visible evidence of that inward spiritual life, so potent, so varied, so abundant, which has animated the Italian people uninterruptedly from antiquity till now. What a debt does not the world owe to Italian merchants and explorers, to Italian artists and craftsmen, to Italian poets and musicians, to Italian scholars and thinkers ! Contrast the amazing fertility of the Italian genius in mediæval and modern times with the almost absolute sterility of the Greek in the same period. Since the final separation of the Eastern from the Western Empire, what has Greece contributed to the sum of human thought, to the progress of human knowledge, to the improvement of human society ? If we except the legislation of

Justinian, which was rather a codification of old Roman law than a fresh contribution to jurisprudence, the Byzantine Empire produced nothing of value for the general amelioration of our race; it gave birth to no single great writer or philosopher or artist whose influence extended far beyond the limits of his native land, and whose name the world will not willingly let die. And the same blight which sterilized the Greek genius through the Byzantine period persisted under the Turkish dominion, and has continued with little change from the War of Liberation to the present day. In literature, in science, in art, the map of modern Greece might almost be a blank for all that the country has contributed to the higher departments of thought, to the noblest activities of the human mind.

In these, as well as in the sphere of politics, Greece has been far outstripped by her ancient rival, and lives, like Spain, for the world at large chiefly in the memory of her glorious past. Of the three great southern peninsulas which were touched by the early beams of civilization while the rest of Europe was still plunged in darkness, Italy alone has kept the sacred fire burning on her altars from then till now. Naturally one of the most beautiful countries on earth, she is historically perhaps the most interesting of all, by reason of the long unbroken development which links her present to her past. She is the golden

bridge across which we can still travel in thought back through the night of the Middle Ages to the sunset glory of the antique world : she is like one of her own ancient aqueducts which still bring to the heart of the Eternal City a current of living water from the purple mountains that loom, faint and dim as dreams, on the far horizon. *Hinc lucem et pocula sacra.*

VI

UNDER A TUSCAN CASEMENT

He sings:

The moon is up above the wood,
It shimmers on the lake.
I'm here beneath your window,
Awake, my love, awake!

On yonder spray the nightingale
Attunes her love-lorn lay.
O listen to a lover's tale,
Too soon will break the day.

I've come so far, fair lady,
So many a weary mile,
To see your golden ringlets,
To win your bonny smile.

Then come away, my dearest,
Sweet Lisa, come with me,
Far far beyond the forest,
Across the rolling sea.

She opens the casement and sings :

Who bids me leave in danger
And care my native strand,
To roam with him, a stranger,
To some far foreign land ?

He sings :

O, I'm a knight, fair lady,
With sword and steed and lance,
And that far foreign country
Is the gay land of France.

She sings :

They tell me it is lovely,
That land of chivalry,
But no hearts can beat so kindly
As at home in Tuscany.

He sings :

The night grows late, sweet lady,
O haste thee for my sake!
See, see above the mountains
The day begins to break.

[*A red flush spreads over the eastern sky.*

The time of love soon closes.
So sweet, so dear it seems,
It passes like the roses,
Like youth, like spring, like dreams.

She sings :

What will you give your dearest,
If she should go with thee,
Far far beyond the forest,
Across the rolling sea ?

He sings :

I'll give thee jewels, lady ;
The richest shall be thine,
The pearls of the ocean,
The rubies of the mine.

She sings :

Dearer to me than jewels
Is every flower that blows.
Rather than Indian rubies
I'd wear a Tuscan rose.

He sings :

A crown of gold I'll give thee,
Bright as the sun its sheen ;
For I'm of France the monarch,
And you shall be the queen.

She sings :

Who speaks of crowns and jewels,
The beams of light they dart,
May gain the hand of maiden,
But not the maiden's heart.

A crown could win me never,
No royal grace I sue.
But will you love me ever ?
O will you love me true ?

They speak of love that's deathless,
Of troth that lasts for aye,
Of hearts that beat together,
Though all the seas run dry.

They say that souls once plighted,
When life's brief dream is o'er,
Will meet beyond death's river,
Will meet to part no more.

Then tell me that you love me,
Will love in endless trust,
When loving lips are silent,
And loving hearts are dust.

He sings:

Come joys or come distresses,
I'll love thee then as now,
When all your golden tresses
Are silvered on your brow.

It shall be yours for ever,
My living, dying love.
We'll only part, my darling,
To meet in heaven above.

She sings:

O then, I'll come, my dearest,
I'll come away with thee,
Far far beyond the forest,
Across the rolling sea.

VII

JUNE IN CAMBRIDGE

Another June is passing,
And faded is the may,
And still o'er books I linger
The livelong summer day.

For me there is no summer,
No deep woods sunlight-pied,
No purple heather on the hill
A wimpling burn beside.

For me no rippling river
Flows on by weald and wold,
With lilies on its bosom
And its feet on sands of gold.

I shall not feel the breezes,
I may not smell the sea
That breaks to-day in Scotland
On shores how dear to me !

I'm far away, dear Scotland,
A prisoner in the halls
Where sluggish Cam steals silent
By ancient English walls.

Still, still I con old pages
And through great volumes wade,
While life's brief summer passes,
And youth's brief roses fade.

Ah yes ! Through these dull pages
A glimmering vista opes,
Where fairer flowers are blowing
Than bloom on earthly slopes.

The dreamland world of fancy !
There is my own true home,
There are the purple mountains
And blue seas fringed with foam.

And there the deathless garlands
That crown the chosen head,
When youth's brief June is over,
And youth's brief roses dead.

VIII

THE STUDENT'S DREAM

A FRAGMENT

THE day was done, and softly
The sunset whispered, Rest!
So I laid my books by the window
And gazed on the golden west.

I had read of saints and sages,
Of poets gay and grave,
I had read of knights and ladies,
The beautiful, the brave.

Still through my glowing fancy
Came floating visions bright,
The hero's sword of battle,
The poet's crown of light.

I saw a bright procession—
And I would I saw it now—
With a star on every forehead
And the bay on every brow.

IX

THE STUDENT'S TEMPTATION

Faust in his study, drowsy, the lamp burning low, day beginning to break.—Chorus of Spirits:

Night is passing!
In the sky the stars are paling,
Birds are waking, day is breaking,
Sleep no more!

Day is passing!
In the west the red sun sinketh,
Flowers are sleeping, stars are peeping,
Work no more!

Youth is passing!
Life's brief spring will soon be o'er,
Flowers are dying, summer's flying,
Wait no more!

X

MY OLD STUDY

FINALLY, I thank the members, present and past, of the Council of Trinity College who, by thrice prolonging my Fellowship, have enabled me, free from sordid care, to pass my days in "the calm and still air of delightful studies" amid surroundings of all others the most congenial to learning. The windows of my study look on the tranquil court of an ancient college, where the sundial marks the silent passage of the hours, and in the long summer days the fountain plashes drowsily amid flowers and grass; where, as the evening shadows deepen, the lights come out in the blazoned windows of the Elizabethan hall, and from the chapel the sweet voices of the choir, blent with the pealing music of the organ, float on the peaceful air, telling of man's eternal aspirations after truth and goodness and immortality. Here if anywhere, remote from the tumult and bustle of the world with its pomps and vanities and ambitions, the student may hope to hear the still voice of truth, to penetrate through

the little transitory questions of the hour to the realities which abide, or rather which we fondly think must abide, while the generations come and go. I cannot be too thankful that I have been allowed to spend so many quiet and happy years in such a scene, and when I quit my old college rooms, as I soon shall do, for another home in Cambridge, I shall hope to carry forward to new work in a new scene the love of study and labour which has been, not indeed implanted, but fostered and cherished in this ancient home of learning and peace.

XI

A DREAM OF CAMBRIDGE

Last night I slept and dreamed a dream. I thought I was once more in Cambridge, and in my old rooms looking out on the Great Court of Trinity. It was evening and the window was open. Across the court I saw again, as I had seen so often, the lighted windows of the hall, and above the roof of the Master's lodge the evening star like a silver lamp hung low in the western sky. In the chapel close at hand the organ was playing and the choir was singing. When their voices ceased and the deep rolling notes of the organ had died away into silence, I heard a footfall on the stair. It drew near, a tap followed, the door opened, and the figure of a dear friend entered. He has long been in his grave, but last night I saw him again as in life. He said, "I am tired. Will you walk with me a little in the court? Perhaps I shall sleep the better for it." I put out my lamp and we descended the stairs together.

When we issued on the court the moon had

risen. How pale and ghostly the roofs looked in her silvery light, how blanched and wan the flowers in their bed about the fountain, where the falling water plashed with a murmurous sound as soft as sleep ! We passed the windows of the hall, now dark, silent, and deserted, and, ascending the steps, traversed the screens and emerged on the terrace overlooking Neville's Court. Around us lay the cloisters, on the one side shrouded in deep darkness, on the other side flooded with the broad moonbeams, only the shadows of the pillars showing like black bars on the pavement. We paced them for a time in discourse, as of old, on friends and books, on Nature's loveliness, on the glories of the antique world, on the vision, the beatific vision, of a Golden Age to come. Then, quitting the cloisters, we passed under the archway and entered the long avenue of limes, where the interlacing branches cast a chequer-work of shadow on the moonlit path. We paused on the bridge over the river. How sweet the moonlight slept upon the water and silvered all the foliage of the trees that drooped their pendent boughs into the placid stream, while the white bridges, like sheeted ghosts, receded line beyond line into the distance—a scene of enchantment or fairyland forlorn !

And now, with the inconstancy of dreams, the season and the landscape suddenly changed. It was a sunshiny afternoon in May. The college gardens through which we passed were gay with

the pink and white blossoms of the chestnuts, with the purple and gold of the lilac and laburnum. Beyond them we entered the fields and followed the footpath beside the long hedgerow under the dappled shade of the tall elms. The hedges were white with the hawthorn bloom, and the air was heavy with its fragrance. Yet farther on we crossed the meadows, starred with buttercups and daisies, and passed through the graveyard of the little old Coton Church, with its grey tower rising among the trees and its moss-grown headstones sleeping among the grass. Thence by the familiar footpath we ascended the slope of Madingley Hill. Insensibly as we advanced the season seemed to change, for now the snow-white blossom of the hawthorn in the hedges had turned to red roses, and now in the fields around us the yellow corn, spangled with scarlet poppies, stood ripe for the sickle ; and yet again the woods that fringed the crest of the hill showed here and there the russet hues of autumn. On gaining the summit we stood once more, as we had stood so often, near the ruined windmill (few now remember it !), to survey the landscape, the far-spreading peaceful landscape, before bending our steps homeward. To the right the spire of Coton church just peeped over the shoulder of the hill, like a finger pointing steadfastly from the transient tumults and sorrows of earth to the eternal peace and joy of heaven. At our feet the high road ran down the slope, and then,

girt with trees, flowed away like a wave in green undulations to the distant woods, above which appeared the spires and pinnacles of Cambridge. Beyond them we could discern the low blue line of the Gog Magog hills with the white scar of the high road climbing their steep side, while away to the north the towers of Ely Cathedral loomed like specks on the far horizon, faint and dim as dreams.

After contemplating the scene for a time in silence we turned to descend the hill. Before we did so I said to my companion, "Last night I dreamed an ill dream." "What was it?" he asked. "I dreamed," I said, "that you were dead, and that I had left Cambridge for ever." "But it was only a dream," he answered, smiling, "for here I am, and yonder, among the woods, is Cambridge. We shall soon be there together." As he spoke he suddenly vanished. I looked about me, but the landscape on which but a moment before I had gazed with rapture was gone, and I heard a voice like the sighing of the wind which cried, "For ever! for ever!" I woke with a start. The grey light of a London morning was stealing through the curtains, and still, half sleeping, half waking, I heard a voice dying away in the distance, which cried, "For ever! for ever!"

XII

MEMORIES OF YOUTH

To-night, with the muffled roar of London in my ears, I look down the long vista of the past and see again the little white town by the sea, the hills above it tinged with the warm sunset light. I hear again the soft music of the evening bells, the bells of which they told us in our childhood, that though we did not heed them now, we would remember them when we were old. Across the bay, in the deepening shadow, lies sweet Roseneath, embowered in its woods, and beyond the dark and slumbrous waters of the loch peep glimmering through the twilight the low green hills of Gareloch, while above them tower far into the glory of the sunset sky the rugged mountains of Loch Long. Home of my youth! There in the little house in the garden—the garden where it seems to me now that it was always summer and the flowers were always bright—the garden where the burn winds wimpling over the pebbles under the red sandstone cliffs—I dreamed the long, long dreams

of youth. A mist, born not of the sea, rises up and hides the scene. And as the vision fades, like many a dream of youth before, I look out into the night, and see the lights and hear again the muffled roar of London.

XIII

LIFE'S FITFUL FEVER

Apart from all questions of its religious and historical import, which do not here concern us, the Bible is an epic, if not a history, of the world ; or, to change the metaphor, it unrolls a vast panorama in which the ages of the world move before us in a long train of solemn imagery, from the creation of the earth and the heavens onward to the final passing away of all this material universe and the coming of a new heaven and a new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness. Against this gorgeous background, this ever shifting scenery, now bright with the hues of heaven, now lurid with the glare of hell, we see mankind strutting and playing their little part on the stage of history. We see them taken from the dust and returning to the dust. We see the rise and fall of empires : we see great cities, now the hive of busy multitudes, now silent and desolate, a den of wild beasts. All life's fever is there—its loves and hopes and joys, its high endeavours, its suffering and sin and sorrow.

And then, last scene of all, we see the great white throne and the endless multitude gathered before it : we hear the final doom pronounced ; and as the curtain falls we catch a glimpse of the fires of hell and the glories of heaven—a vision of a world (how different from this !) where care and sin and sorrow shall be no more, where the saints shall rest from their labours, and where God Himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. This may not be science and history, but it is at least an impressive pageant, a stately drama : without metaphor, it is noble literature, and like all noble literature it is fitted to delight, to elevate, and to console.

XIV

BEYOND THE SHADOWS

It is gratifying to me to observe that the example which I set of treating the Bible as pure literature has since been followed by others, who have similarly edited the Old and New Testaments or portions of them in a form divested, as far as possible, of all purely theological import. The publication of such books may be welcomed as a sign that the love of the Bible is not confined to those who accept its dogmas. Though many of us can no longer, like our fathers, find in its pages the solution of the dark, the inscrutable riddle of human existence, yet the volume must still be held sacred by all who reverence the high aspirations to which it gives utterance, and the pathetic associations with which the faith and piety of so many generations have invested the familiar words. The reading of it breaks into the dull round of common life like a shaft of sunlight on a cloudy day, or a strain of solemn music heard in a mean street. It seems to lift us for a while out of ourselves, our little cares

and little sorrows, into communion with those higher powers, whatever they are, which existed before man began to be, and which will exist when the whole human race, as we are daily reminded by the cataclysms and convulsions of Nature, shall be swept out of existence for ever. It strengthens in us the blind conviction, or the trembling hope, that somewhere, beyond these earthly shadows, there is a world of light eternal, where the obstinate questionings of the mind will be answered and the heart find rest.

XV

AD LIBELLUM SUUM
AUCTOR

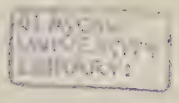
En ultimam tibi manum dedi : iam evoles quaeso e fumo strepituque huius maximae rerum urbis : iam hortos petas apricos locosque quietis et tranquillitatis plenissimos, quos ego non sine desiderio recordor. Subit enim saepe vel vigilantis vel dormientis animo species aulae illius et fonte pellucido et floribus purpureis distinctae : subit taciturni fluminis imago antiquos subterlabentis muros : videor mihi adhuc prata illa amoena cum caris pererrans amicis benigno aestivam sermone noctem tendere : videor mihi adhuc audire suaves sacri illius chori voces vesperascente die quasi occiduum solem canoro deflentis concentu. Ah quotiens ibi volvente anno et albis incanescentem rosis sepem et flavam puniceis intermixtam papaveribus Cererem admiratus sum ! Quotiens

silvas illas, quae longinquum supereminent collem, iam vernis virescentes solibus iam auctumnali rubescentes frigore vidi ! Quotiens me lento devexum amni spissa arborum aestus levantium recreavit umbra, dum vel aquarum murmur cadentium vel populearum susurrus frondium levem inire somnum suadebat ! O rura mihi prae Fortunatorum insulis illis cara ! O arva me iudice fabulosis Hesperidum hortis beatiora ! Quam suaviter ibi olim longos fallentibus annos studiis incubui ! Quam libenter ibi et ipso consumerer aevo et supremum conderem diem ! Utcunque erit, iuvabit tamen diu ibi vixisse et pro virili parte vacavisse Musis. Scilicet beatus ille mihi prae ceteris esse videtur qui in veri investigatione totus versatur a rumoribus hominum et invidia et prava ambitione longe remotus ac ne mortis quidem metu perturbatus : etenim dum immensas caeli terraeque regiones, dum infinitam et praeteriti temporis et futuri seriem mente contemplatur, fit ut animus a pusillis negotiis curisque aversus et in rerum cognitione defixus fragilitatem humanam quodammodo exuat et immortalitatem nescio quam cogitando capessat. Hac vita qui fruitur non regibus invidet purpureis, non triumphali scandentibus Capitolium curru, non Olympiaca superbientibus palma. Haec nobis omnibus, quibus florem aetatis ibi carpere contigit, iuvenibus arridebant : haec senibus memoria recolentibus placent : haec ut post nos quam plurimis et iuvenibus et senibus edaci intacta

tempore placeant, quidquid in caelo deorum est nuncupatis votis precamur et oramus.

Scribebam Londini
intra sacratos terminos Templi
Nonis Iuniis anno Domini MDCCCCXIX.

THE END



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